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A TUM Production, in association with Film Victoria. Produced by Miranda Bain, Timothy White. Written, directed by Richard Lowenstein, from unpublished book, "Dead Men Don't Dig Coal" by Wendy Lowenstein. Camera (color), Andrew De Groot, editor, Jill Blcock, music, Declan Atley, production design, Tracy Wall, costumes, Jennie Tate. Reviewed at Australian Film Commission Theatre, Sydney, Jan. 6, 1984. Running time: 90 MINs.

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Ken Cameron

Ken Cameron's second feature, Fast Talking, is tough, funny and uncompromising in its critique of Australian institutions, particularly the relationship between the education system and the working-class outskirts of society.

Cameron had already made two short films on the subject of teachers and pupils confronting the inflexibility of a bureaucratic education system. *Sailing to Brooklyn* (1975), made while Cameron was still teaching English at a high school in New South Wales, is about a relationship between a young English teacher and a high-school girl. *Temperament Unaltered* (1978), with Steven Spears and Robyn Nevin, concerns a "student teacher who is too radical for the school he is sent to and ends up getting into conflict with the staff".

In 1977, Cameron made *Out of It*, which tells of three unemployed youths who head north in an old car after a bungled robbery. It continues his fascination with people "who are just outside the law and in conflict with things".

Monkey Grip (1982), Cameron's first feature, looks at communal life in the inner-city suburbs of Melbourne and extends his interest in the complexity of human relationships. Again, the characters are people on the fringe of society.

Since completing *Fast Talking*, Cameron has directed a tele-feature for producer Michael Carson at the ABC. He describes *Crime of the Decade*, which went to air in August this year, as "Fast Talking 2. It uses a lot of the same actors . . . but it takes the story a year further on when things have grown much rougher . . ."

Cameron is interviewed here by Geoff Mayer and Scott Murray.

I wrote the first sketch of *Fast Talking* in 1980 at a time when I didn't think I could get *Monkey Grip* made. [Producer] Pat Lovell and I had been trying for a couple of years to get *Monkey Grip* financed and we almost had it together when it fell through. So, I started work on *Fast Talking*.

But, not long after, the money for *Monkey Grip* came through and I had to abandon work on *Fast Talking*. I went back to it at the end of 1982.

"Fast Talking" has a strong anti-authority motif: for instance, the opening with the bus and the scene in the teacher's room which you set against the ending of the film when Steve Carson (Shed Zwick) risks off . . .

All my films in schools express (and it is not that I am anti-education, it is that I think schools are a model for Australian society. They are everyone's first contact with authority, with the rules. In *Fast Talking*, you see Steve's struggling with authority figures, not just at the school, but also with the police, his father and his elder brother — all these coercive figures. It is a problem that Australians have: the struggle to express oneself, or to be oneself, with so many failures. I know I have had it.

Does that come out of your school background?

The film is my life, my growing up and my attitude towards authority. It is very hard in Australia to feel free to express strong opinion. There are so many restrictions and the more you can achieve usually is just to be quiet, like Steve — he is always slipping out of the window or checking away. You can't confront it head on because you will fail. The old papers soon get knocked down.

You have been very savage with some of the teachers: the scene when Steve makes the wooden pens and the vice-principal's preoccupation with his ink and his penman . . .

There is hardly anything in *Fast Talking* that I haven't somehow seen or heard in schools. All of it is culled from observation or memory, including the fish and the peaches. At the high school in which I taught, the deputy principal did nothing but water the garden, enter it to gardening competitions and co-opt the kids into chess plays to work in it.

When I have seen the film with an audience of teachers they have responded straight away, they recognise the level of stress. People who work in private schools or who don't quite recognise that stress think, "This has to be exaggerated", but it isn't. That sort of eccentricity is out there, alive and well.



"Listen pal, you've got to pay attention here, that's it! School!" Steve and Redback (Steve Raley) Ken Cameron's Fast Talking

There seems to be a sense of rebirth in the film. Steve is dogmatically vindicated against him or through him; for example, in the end sequence when he is breaking out of Redback's (Steve Raley) yard and in the sequence when Steve is talking to Sharon Hart (Tracy Mann) . . .

Schools are like that. The kids are there, we didn't put them there.

No, but you have gone to some trouble to frame things in a certain way . . .

Nowadays, schools feel they are under attack. Since the days of 10 per cent unemployment, there has been a lot of hostility directed towards them. The Steve Cannon character is not going to be aware of his political situation but he knows instinctively that he is going to get screwed; the school is just keeping him captive until he is kicked out and left unemployed. School is a bit like a penal institution.

You don't see either the school or the family institution as offering solutions?

No. On the contrary, the schools have contributed to the division of kids on the basis of gender and class. The school has destroyed his dream.

Do many people object to the film being unsentimental?

A lot of people want lovable characters. When we had trouble getting distribution, that was one

of the things levelled against us. People thought the film was too harsh, but I was just trying to be truthful and, if you want to portray someone like that carefully, someone just doesn't have a place.

But the lack of sentiment comes through even in the humor of the film. One of the scenes which has shocked a few people is the one in which Meggie, the dog, strangles the cat . . .

Well, kids respond to that. I saw the film a couple of weeks ago at a

snack preview with an audience mainly of kids. The scene struck them. They laugh a lot but then it hits them and they realize it is not funny; the cat is dead and the poor woman is going to suffer when she finds out. But it is a black humor I have seen in so many kids. They are not sentimental; they can often laugh at the most awful things.

There is a type of conservatism among a lot of adults towards kids—I don't know what you would call it, "laddism" or something—whereby they try to be protective and deny kids a

truthful view of things. You will see it, say, in children's television, when you see an attempt to deny the complexity of teenage life.

Do you mean "The Brady Bunch" and "Little House on the Prairie" syndrome . . .

You see it in Australian programs as well. It is an attempt to feed kids what adults think they ought to know. All the references to marijuana and the other 'teenies' stuff in Fast Talking strike a lot of people as just 'off'. We were told by some people that the film should get an "R", that it shouldn't be seen by kids, but, of course, there is nothing in it that is unusual. People, however, don't look at it that way; a lot of the adults balk at the scenes with the wooden penit or the marijuana.

We had an Australian National Opinion Poll done of the kids' reactions and they were fantastic. The kids were seeing the issues of the kid's imagination and the fantastic world into which he was heading. It was far more sophisticated than that of the adults.

The one scene that disturbs some teachers is the burning of the school. That is a fairly rare in Melbourne . . .

It is totally rare in Sydney. What is important about the burning of the school is why people do it. They are not just vandals who have come out of nowhere and burn the school; they are (often) people who have a terrible hostility towards the school. I think that Fast Talking reveals why these kids burn it. They are not wanting to burn it—that is an accident and, in fact, they try to put it out. They break in because they feel they are being ripped off. It is an act of revenge.

Schools have to acknowledge that, if they play a part in people's lives, then they have to expect to be accountable. The problem with schools is that it is usually a one-way system: the kids don't feel they can express their grievances or control their lives there.

In one scene, Redback is fixing the wheels of a bike and Steve is looking at him with great glimmering, healthy attitude. Redback says to him, "Listen pal, you've got to pay attention here, that's it! School." That seems to be a crucial point in the context of the film . . .

A lot of guys are like the Steve character, their lives are imposed on them as far as having other identifiable modes to whom they can relate. That is what Redback's life has been in good but somehow he survived that experience, built a bit of a business and created a life for himself. Steve recognizes in this tough attitude, but there is also a warmth about the guy. And Steve



Steve and teacher Sharon Hart (Tracy Mann) "I have always had a problem with this," Fast Talking



Steve (Rod Taylor) is checked by the word-book teacher (Shirley Maer) who is a source of the movies going on in his pocket. *Fast Talking*.

can see a purpose in what Rodback does: you fix a bike and sell it. That makes sense to the kid, whereas school is abstract, bitter and pretty pointless.

That is, "I've seen this show before", is one interpretation of the end of the film when Steve is riding off. There is a small camera truck in on Rodback, before the lunge forward to Steve going off into the sunset...

I think it is pretty clear that Steve will get caught and spend time in jail. But, ultimately, he

will grow up and probably become his Rodback. He will have to go through that stage to come out the other side. Some people say he should be punished but I think it is very clear that the film has another destiny in mind for him.

Actually, some teachers have said they thought he should be punished...

But that would be terrible, it would be a colossal ending if he suffered or were punished. Moral growth, any sort of growth, has to come from within. If he were

punished, then he would just be bitter and hostile. It is as if he has to rebel and take charge of his own destiny to grow. And that is what the school system doesn't allow: a contrast to impose regularity which doesn't give him the space to grow.

Can we talk about some of the actors in "Fast Talking", especially the young ones? Chris Trussell, who played The Moose, Rod Zanne (Steve Carson) and Tom Allyn (Nick). Where did you find them?

I spent about three months walking around the Western suburbs in Rodback, along small drizzle lanes in schools, just to see if I could find the right kind of people. I would go to a school and give a drama lesson for an hour or two to a group of 20 or 30 people. I would do some free improvisation and out of that, sometimes if I were lucky, I would find a person or two whom I thought was worth following up. People such as Rod just stood out. I found him in a high school at Rockswold.

So he had no acting experience before the film?

Only within the high school.

Was it the same with Chris Trussell?

No. Chris was a bit older than the others, about 17, and had just left school. He was found a different way. We had a campaign on the radio station 2SM to see if we could bring in a larger group of people than I could find. Chris

responded to an advertisement on the radio and came in with the others to spend a minute talking on tape. I wasn't present, but Chris did impress me and he was very funny.

Chris is not an actor, he works as an apprentice printer. I guess there was something that hadn't occurred to him, but, as with a lot of kids that age, he just loves making things on television.

So the money wasn't inhibited by the camera...

No, there wasn't to do it. They weren't people who needed money. Tom is a bit different. He was still at school when I met him — she is only about 16 — and nowadays she is more interested in rock 'n' roll than acting. Both Tom and Rod have parts in *Mad Max 3*.

How did you go about choosing the music for the film?

Sharon Calcraft has only done a couple of scores, for *Far East and Winter of Our Dreams*. I knew her when I was working, she was in 5th Form when I first met her in high school.

Are you happy with the music in the film?

Yes, but it is an unusual score. Some people have told me they thought the film should have had "full on" rock 'n' roll.

Music is always out of those things you never know about. It is a huge creative area that can influence a film in many ways. Sharon and I were both enthusiastic about the bass guitar sound with the little guy.

Obviously, you have chosen the setting of the film carefully, such as with the scene in which Steve takes Midge for a run along the beach.

It is not a beach, it is more a divided landscape full of junk cars. People have destroyed the light covering of bushes and trees, and have left a grass, sandy wasteland — it is like an urban *Australis* desert. The choice of location was deliberate and an extension of my thoughts about the school. *Australis* is like a junk yard, like most industrial regions and suburban cities, and I wanted the environment to be an expression of the damaged that society has for a character such as Steve.

I used Botany of the time because it is where *Australis* began — it is where James Cook and Joseph Banks first came ashore and took a walk — but here it is like the "archade" of Sydney. In any other country in the world, it would probably be an incredible park or a beautiful environment, but here it has just become a dead industrial zone.



Steve "travels through and checks out the high school. He is like a lucky new running away." *Fast Talking*.



Lewis Fletcher (Chris Griggs) one of the 'new faces of the industry' Ben Cameron's *Crime of the Decade*

Who did you decide to do "Crime of the Decade" after "Fast Talking"?

Because it was a chance to extend all that work I had done with those teenagers. Every time you do a film with kids, you really regret that they go back to school or work. You know that the time they had of filmmaking is all they will ever get. I feel a real commitment to those people.

Another reason I wanted to do *Crime of the Decade* was that it developed an area that I had touched on in *Fast Talking*. I wanted to go further. Of course, the big difference is that I didn't write it. Michael Cove did. It was the first time I had worked as someone else's script. It was interesting learning about that process.

Were you at all concerned about the similarity of the two films?

No, I would be really surprised if, outside the film industry, the same someone asked for both films. I mean, 15-year-olds will go and see *Fast Talking* but I don't think any of them will watch *Crime of the Decade* on the ABC.

One of the problems I have had with films in the past is that no one has seen them. *Temperament Unstable* was seen only by a specialist audience and some people in the industry. So I don't think my problem has ever been over-exposure.

There are some scenes in "Crime of the Decade" which are nearly identical to ones in "Fast Talking", such as when an older brother presses a younger brother into asking "uncle" to his interests...

Of course. But Michael Cove had not seen *Fast Talking*, and I didn't want him to because I didn't want him to be influenced by it. So, it is interesting how similar they are.



Andy (Chris Griggs) is questioned by Officer Dancer (Ben Cameron) "Crime of the Decade" was an attempt to make a different statement that would be provocative.

Michael lives on the fringe of that area, and he has spent a lot of time talking with the people who went to the Minto Community Centre, where we shot the film.

The stories he wrote are all based on actual cases. Some people find some of the stuff exaggerated and ridiculous, but that is because they don't want to come to terms with it. And when you work in that documentary style, inevitably you come up with similar kinds of cases. But *Crime of the Decade* does go further. In *Fast Talking*, you have kids smoking eggs in the chicken farms. In *Crime*, the chicken farms is the place where the kids go to work. So it is bleak, it is further down the track. It also addresses itself to class division in Australia.

Another way we have done this is to retain the upper middle-class dinner party with the story of those kids. We go home and social divisions and the structure of *Crime* is a deliberate attempt to make those two worlds rub up against one another. People will be forced to check their allegiances. It is an experimental structure and not a sensitive eye in the sense of *Fast Talking*. It is like an essay, a portrait of a particular group of people, and a community.

The structure is also experimental in that the new frames of the two interesting stories are different...

Yes. In fact, one reviewer, who works for that noted Sydney journal of social conscience, *The Sunday Telegraph*, said that it was the worst film he had seen in 10 years and that she couldn't understand how these boring people got to dinner so regularly. She didn't even catch on to the fact that there was one time frame intercut with a continuing time frame. But, if you do things like that, you just have to expect that a lot of people won't like it or even respond.

"Crime of the Decade" is also easy-like in that it makes an attempt to basic elements of narrative balance: you have no gaps of suspense to enhance the bleakness of your portrait...

It is a delicate film and there is one of the Australian Polymorphous approach of, "Well, things aren't so bad, there is also a lot of happiness in this community. Many people are very contented with their lot, etc." That undercuts any attempt to say something. *Crime* was an attempt to make a

deliberate statement that would be provocative, and it has provoked a very mixed reaction. There are people that just love that sort of filmmaking, and they love what it says.

There is a real tendency in Australia not to want to make statements. There have been *delicious* documentaries with some right out and make a case, but not dramas. In drama, you are supposed to be balanced, with well-rounded characters and a story that goes somewhere. The idea of using drama as an essay-like manner is rare here.

To what extent do you see Michael Cove as the ending as a portrait of violence? Australian communities have seen very little so far...

In our history there has been a lot of violence. In the 1890s, with the Queensland strikes and the drought, there was incredible violence. In the 1920s, there was the same sort of thing, with the coal lock-outs. But it always gets squashed.

What is happening now is the creation of a large peasant class because of the rapid way in which our capitalist economy works. These people will never

work; they will never get a share of the wealth of the country. Soccer or basketball, they will find that soccer and basketball are violent. There is a lot of abuse out there, and why shouldn't they feel angry? Their lives have been so messed around.

You mentioned earlier your use of *Batman* in "Fast Talking." Is a scene, the outside town depicted in "Crime of the Decade" are the new *Batman* Boys, the superheroes of a more modern Australia...

If you go up on top of that water tower in the film, you look one way and see beautiful rolling hills, you look the other way, and it is *Cherrydown*, which stands for noise. We haven't learned to live with the landscape. We breathe things up and that is tragic because there is no burning around and doing it again properly. We haven't organized things so our human beings, we have organized things to get the spiritual class.

I am very interested in the connection between the potential of the country and what it is becoming. I have always admired *The Great Gatsby*, where the central image is the land the Dutch sailors saw, with all its potential, and then there is the Valley of Ashes, which is what it has become.

By seeing "Fast Talking" in *Batman*, do you also intend to link Steve's luridism action with that of the convict?

Yes. Steve is like a descendant of the convict class, the one who has

to obey. The difference with *Crime* is partly a difference of my writing and Michael Crane's. In *Fast Talking*, my character couldn't even duck out the back door. He is like a little rat running away to *Crime*, the character is much there, trapped in an environment. There is no feeling that anyone can escape and that leads to violence. So, there are two different ways of looking at the situation.

The option we have usually taken is to create these conflicts. Most Australian heroes were created, like the bushrangers who ducked off into the bush. They made little forays, but only to then come back into the bush. And *Crime* was a failed attempt by people who stood and fought.

The scene in "Crime of the Decade" is where Steve and Lily (Don Alpay) change their minds about leaving down. It really conveys a sense of standing up to fight. Steve is a leader who won't lead and is almost wilfully defeated. He also refuses to accept the rewards of personal relationships on an individual level. His staying is the act of a nihilist...

I would agree with that. It is not a conventional sense. That nihilism is what I promote in a lot of people who have really been through it, they give up the idea of getting away or staying and fighting. Steve is what the character in *Fast Talking* would be if he were a few years further down the road. That boyish, brash, Glimmer Man quality gives way to a nihilist,



Steve (John Hackett), Lily (Don Alpay), and Terry (John Hackett) in the scene from *Crime of the Decade* where they don't dramatically change things.

slowness defeated quality. And he has all the other problems of adolescence, such as sexual identity and peer self-concept, when you have no job and you can't see where you are heading. Combined with this is an anger ever feeling oppressed by all those failures, by all those people who stand over you. So it is right that he is not very coherent of commitment or even practical. I remember all these things, that confusion.

The whole movement at the end of the film may seem strange, but every part, out there at *Minto*, they have riots where the people go business and turn cars over and burn them. You can't see anything they gain from doing it, it is the letting off of the aggression they feel. So Steve's going up the hill to Laurie Fletcher's (John Gungl) house is a fairly pointless act. You notice that, when they open the door, Lily is not even aware of what is going on. In fact, Steve is not even aware of what is going on. It is just a black moment of acting without thought.

In several of your films, you have touched on the sexual tension between students and teachers. In this a topic you are interested in pursuing further?

I am interested in sexuality and adult relationships, which is why I made *Murphy's Law*. But I want to do more and the new project will do this. It is set partly in the 1960s and partly in the present. It is about people who try to repeat the past and then get in trouble they had in the 1960s. The script is ready and Steve Salvo, an APFS graduate, is going to produce it.

I feel as though I have exhausted what I want to say about schools and teachers because, since I started making those films, there have been so many changes in education. There is a new conservatism that has made schools much more boring, they don't

refer me in the same way. I don't have any faith that there is any potential for social change in schools.

Some people romanticize the potential of teachers. I have always had a problem with that and I don't think I have ever managed to portray the radical teacher properly. The radical teacher is the one who walks out the door and goes somewhere else, to stay within the school defaces what you see.

Terry (John Hackett), the social worker, appears at best to be just hanging in there. He is in a situation where he hasn't any control. Is that all we can hope for from social workers?

I would have thought he was doing a good job, actually. He understands these kids and he knows you can't dramatically change things for them.

There was a scene we shot in which he talked about trying to raise money to buy a block of land in the country, to have a place where they could occasionally go and do some work. This is what the social worker at *Minto* was doing. But for some reason it didn't end up in the film. I'm not sure why — too much like *Pollyanna*, I suppose.

Terry is actually in a bad because when the shit hits the fan he is the one caught in the middle. When there is real trouble, like destruction, it is the social workers who are held in blame, because they are seen to be influencing the kids. That is why Terry gets angry when they start talking about getting violent.

It is the same why I feel about teachers. Those middle people, the ones who try to bridge the gap between the dividers, are part of the problem. *Fifteen*, too, are part of the problem. They are the oil that makes the violent rapists and stalkers in the way of real change. Real change is dividing up the cake. ★



Steve and Lily (Don Alpay) turning down ways of escape in *Crime of the Decade*.

Rebels, Rumbles



and Motor-cycle BOYS



Mark Spratt

"What are you rebelling against, Johnny?"

"What've ya got?"

Marlon Brando as Johnny in *"The Wild One"* (1954)

Is Easy Rider dead? The "born to be wild" ethos of the bike boys, turning their backs on straight and stable society to roar down the open highways in search of freedom, muscle, throwing a scare into a few frightened communities on the way, has almost dwindled away in contemporary cinema. The biker movie had a parabolic rise and fall from *The Wild One* (1954) through the *AmERICAN-INTERNATIONAL* and New World *"Angels"* films, *Easy Rider* (1969) in the 1960s into the prime mixers of the 1970s (e.g., *Biker Boys* go to Vietnam in *The Lords of the Universal Monsters* in the 1940s, those monsters of the road ended up as comedy figures in other stars' movies: Clint Eastwood in *Every Which Way But Loose* (1970) and sequel

Motor-bikes seem to have become transport, not proud symbols carrying wild boys and girls towards their destiny. If motor-bikes can be read as the symbols of fast and dangerous rebellion in the youth movies of the 1950s and '60s, then the genre of rebellion they signified has likewise faded from the screen. The road is the representation of adventure in films of the early 1980s has been largely a conformity to mindless pursuits of partying, sex, social fantasies as well as security and money, all prior to rather than in opposition to rejoining the establishment. If Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) were graduating in 1984 he would be looking up "Success" on the stock market instead of shrinking in horror from the word.

National Lampoon's Animal House (1978) is a watershed for the development of teenage characters in American films since *Reptilicious*, it is two sets of student characters at war with each other, not the faculty or government. The fan-loving slabs spawned dozens of imitations down to the current *Backlash Party* and *Golden-Globes* teenage exploitation quickies. Their upper-class targets learned to prove that an early pursuit of sex, wealth and luxury can also be fun in such films as *Class* (1983) and *Slaky Business* (1983).

Johnny, left; Bumble Fish; Fast Tracking.

"There's something I've got to do. I've got to go. I don't know where — just somewhere, out of here, and I've got to go now."

Aiden Quinn as Johnny Rourke in "Rebels" (1984)

But three films arriving in 1984, two from the U.S. and one from Australia, may signal a turning point in the perception of teenage characters on the screen. All three feature a male teenage hero living in similar stressful home and social situations, saving nothing for what the future (unadulterated) offers. If he conforms by settling into the world prepared for him (this will be precious little, so he is looking for a way out).

Three storylines

Rusty James (Matt Dillon) is a 14-year-old living with his alcoholic father (Dennis Hopper) in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His mother deserted the family when he was five years old. Rusty James develops his other passion known as the Motorcycle Boy (Johnny Rourke) who has a reputation as a gang leader. Rusty James tries to emulate this tough leadership but gets expelled from school and loses his girlfriend, Rusty (Dawn Lane). The Motorcycle Boy has made a bike trip to California and back and becomes fascinated by the "Glamers," "various folk" in the gay shop. He is killed in his attempt to control the town and Rusty James takes his motor cycle to ride off to find the Motorcycle Boy's friends and find his own.

Runable Man (1983) Director: Francis Coppola

Steve (Brad Pitt) is a 14-year-old living with his alcoholic father (Peter Onorati) in a halfway suburb. He expects this just left to be left another town. His older brother, Al (Gray Cook) is a drug pusher who wants Steve as a co-conspirator with the schoolies. Steve has two friends and followers: Tobias (Chris Truitt) and Nick (Tom Atkeson), but is considered a delinquent and a nobody by the school staff who



Brad Pitt as Steve and Steve (Brad Pitt) at a bike working shop, surrounded by his friends. See America's Past Today

went to expel him. Steve meets Redneck (Steve Balok) a former bike racer, now owning a bike working shop, whose love for motor cycles once took him on a joyride to Alice Springs on a stolen bike and friends to jail. Redneck takes a personal interest in Steve, helping him to rid him of his own love. Steve is kidnapped and taken into trouble with the law so he takes a bike to make it out for freedom.

Post Talking (1984) Director: Ken Cameron

Johnny (Aiden Quinn) is a high-school student in an American small town. He lives with his aging, semi-alcoholic father (Johnnie "MOMMY" McMillan) who despises him at some unspecified previous time. Johnny rides a motor cycle on which he performs suicidal stunts. He is a loner at school, disliked by staff as a no-taper and generally disliked by his

classmates for his well-off, careless attitude. Charlie brings him together on several occasions with Tracy (Jeryl Henrich) whose initial indifference to Johnny changes into an attraction when Johnny has disaster (accident) with her mobility and Steve, saving Tracy's life and her well-off boyfriend, Rusty (Adam Baldwin). Johnny and Tracy begin an affair when both Johnny and Tracy begin an affair when Johnny's father dies, his business fails, and he pretends Tracy to get him on his motor cycle to leave the town behind.

Rebels (1984) Director: James Foley

These three films each focus on a young, maverick, white male protagonist who understands that his family history, not happy figures, even his parents, are conspiring to push him into a deviant future. Another world is out there and his motor-cycle represents the only way to escape his boundaries. Wherever the bike takes him has to be better.

These three films are far from being carbon copies of one another, and use a radically different mix of styles to express their content, but nevertheless find common ground in several important areas.

Coppola's mix of black-and-white photographs and wide-angle lenses in *Runable Man* to present the backdrop of Tulsa, Texas have barely noticed that this technique has been "homaged" from *Grand Walker*, *John Comeau*, *East Bound* or perhaps any director who has used black and white extensively. It is important to note that *Runable Man* is not a derivative film, and is most effective and subversive in its stark style or providing a sense of belated familiarity to the desolate and unattractive urban landscapes, expanding the horizon to the characters' space (trapped by a vast space and lowering the sky with the panoramic shots of oppression, fast-moving clouds). Drifting white smoke adds further familiarity to the wide-angled street scenes. The Motorcycle Boy is cold blood, serving in monochrome only, and only the variable film themselves are photographed in color. Rusty James' consciousness and injuries have left him with hallucinations and, in one instance, with an out-of-body experience which might appear impaired on a film in a realistic mode. The doctor of Rusty James' house and the driver down from the 1960s and '50s. The characters seem trapped in different time zones. Rusty James helps for the



Johnny (Aiden Quinn) riding his motor cycle in an attempt to convince the girl to go with him "somewhere out of here". James Foley's Rebels



Left: Rusty-James (Matt Dillner) and the Motorcycle Boy (Mickey Rourke) headbashed and headbashed. Above: "Grouped in different time zones." The Cops (William Sauts), Rusty-James (Motorcycle Boy) and the headbashed cops. (Photo Courtesy: Rumble Fish)

turns of the days of the gangs, his father addresses the prison through drink and every-where clocks tick onward as a repetitive motif, signaling a great handover one on the tide of a ferry as a backdrop for one of the Motorcycle Boy's confrontations with the law. The setting, then, of *Rumble Fish* is partly geographical, partly a state of mind.

By contrast, *Fast Talking* is strictly realistic and naturally colored. The locations in Sydney's industrial suburbs are not modified by tricks of photography or color-coding, but effectively delineate an unattractive milieu in which to grow up. Its borders are large factories, freeways, a water-pipe dip, the concrete equities of the school and shabby streets. These locations are used with considerable flair, especially the giant holes of waste paper which are the film's most surreal aspect, providing a background to several scenes and the setting for the chase Steve leads the school prelate on. This chase and other scenes is heightened by persuasive music on the sound track. Whereas *Rusty-James* doesn't interact with the post-war, post-urban setting of *Rumble Fish*, *Steve* in *Fast Talking* uses his environment for his own ends, making quick escapes down school drainpipes and across roofs, sneakily shattering from the grips of cops in underground rooms, stairwells and toilets, and leaping on to the back of a passing truck when about to be arrested for stealing newspapers. Steve is a cunning survivor and he returns to the local possibilities and has to stay. Rusty-James in his things, surviving more by instinct, toughness and not a little help from the Motorcycle Boy.

The movie in *Rumble Fish* (the same location is that in *The Deer Hunter*) is dominated to no over-precise extent by the huge steel mill which appears to loom above everything in all directions, even the cemetery. They had night in some and maybe till the air, allowing no escape for the workers, whose poor housing is in its shadow. Those whom the industry has made rich have their own agencies and lush suburbs, the away from the mill. The film opens with Johnny's wedding just at the town: a look out point complete with two-in-a-row flamboyant for the panorama of chimney and smoke. Johnny plays his romantic act of defiance by placing a beer can on the very edge of the precipice and seeing his motorcycle towards it, skidding in

the last moment to knock over the can with his rear wheel. When he takes Tracy to the back out it is to reinforce his dream of getting away from there. He can't do it unless he can convince someone else that what he sees is hell on earth. *Rumble Fish* is photographed in rich reds and blacks by the German director of photography Michael Ballhaus who succeeds magnificently by using long lenses to create an environment in which the noise, heat and presence of the mill are everywhere. Significantly, when Johnny takes Tracy into the school at night they go up to the boiler room to make love for the first time, surrounded by pipes and steam.

Fast Talking is the film most concerned with telling a realistic story of a boy from a broken home without too many trappings of expressionist style. It differs too from the American film in having no teenage roles played by actors close to the correct age, rather than in or approaching their twenties. The greater age of the American actors perhaps makes their explicit sexual encounters more acceptable to the most audience. *Fast Talking* includes references to contraceptives and subtly suggests a relationship between an older student and the young student teacher Sharon (Tia Neri), but romance between Steve and Vicki is at its creative height. Drugs are seen to be a greater part of the Australian kids' lives than sex, but are dispensed by Rusty-James for their part in breaking up the gangs.

Steve has been coined into dope dealer by his brother Al. Al convinces Steve for being soft and sentimental about their father, pushes Steve's dog, and tries to convince him that money is the only thing worth being watched in. Steve's father is pictured as a hopeless and violent drunk, a casualty of chronic unemployment. Steve is the most affected by his mother's leaving at the beginning of the film.

Rusty-James doesn't remember his mother who left him when he was two. He would like to be the Motorcycle Boy, stepping into his shoes as gang leader, but that his left hand behind. He is unconcerned about his future, caring only about his status as the toughest kid around and a little about Parry. His father, an intellectual drifted into alcoholism, isn't an authority figure, even a benign older brother who Rusty-James rarely comprehends. Neither son is always understood and the Motorcycle Boy, who is always there to save his skin. The Motorcycle

Boy is soaked within himself, color blind and mentally dead, eventually lost in his obsession to liberate the pet store's marble fish.

Steve's surrogate brother, Radback, has the closest perspective on Steve's future. Like the Motorcycle Boy, he stole marble fishes for periods, once going as far as Alice Springs, but after the routine of reform schools and jail he has gone straight and wants Steve to do the same. The Motorcycle Boy's traps have taken him to California, which he found "as amazing as this place", but it's where he found his mother. Rusty-James does pick up and fulfill his dream of riding the bike as far as the ocean, too.

Johnny is more of a loner, an outsider. He is



Steve and his girl friend Vicki (Tia Neri) after through their headbashed film. *Fast Talking*



Randy James and French, after the fight, the first kissing through Rumble Fish

as only child and his mother left at some unspecified time. He is obsessed to Tracy's boyfriend, the preformed Randy, who knows exactly what he wants to do: follow his father in the management of American Steel. When Randy tells Johnny that he "used to be normal" and asks what happened, Johnny replies that he "grew out of it." Johnny's father is overweight, unshakably drunk, often collapsing at work and humiliating Johnny to be called out of school to collect him. His father takes pride in Johnny's achievement in the football team, sticking outings inside his locker and admiring Johnny in his way while chiding him for being clumsy and not filling it out at the shoulders. Johnny is run into his father in a future, a later his mother walked out on. When Johnny finds his father with another woman, dancing in Johnny's room, it causes a violent fight and Johnny's leaving home.

All these young heroes are branded out-leaders by the school system, Steve and Randy-James actually being expelled. Fast Talking addresses itself directly to the problem that schoolkids are aware that few of them have any chance of obtaining a good job and can only react with apathy or looking to crime. Their attitudes are reinforced by disillusioned teachers telling them they are being educated for the idle. At Johnny's school the students are asked to fill out a form prior to career day outlining their activities and hopes for the future. Johnny's answers are "To get out of here" and "More."

Rumble Fish and Fast Talking both have modern instrumental music scores and the latter has songs performed by Rumblefish in the context of a school dance. Rumblefish, however, undercuts its teens, moths and ideas with clearly chosen pop music mixed with a score by Thomas Newman. More liberating is the school dance sequence. Used that point, Tracy has teased Johnny with sex stories and open contempt. An accident in the arrangement has paired her with Johnny instead of Randy for the dance. She reluctantly dances with him to the slow ball of Larry Graham's "One in a Million You". Johnny rips the

record off the player as danger to replace it with the more dynamic "Never Say Never" by Kansas. Vind, which seems to speak an electric statement in the past who dance superbly to the repetitive lyrics "I might like you better if we slept together." Later, they break into the school at night and read the school files. Johnny learns that he is potentially dangerous. He decides to live up to his potential and they begin wrecking the office, then go swimming in the pool after carrying on Kim Wilde's "Kiss in America". At last, "We're the kids of America", underlining the signs of joyful destruction. These signs of a whole world to explore at the end are beautifully expressed in Rob Sargent's "Roll Me Away": "So I'm on top, looking at the great divide. I can go east or west, it's for me to decide."

In each film, violent aggression forms a part of everyone's love. Randy-James is challenged to a fight at the beginning of Rumble Fish. He

hopes his friends will support him so it will be a real gamble. It is. In fact, it is one of the screen's most lightening and dastardly choreographed gang fights, broken up by the arrival of the Motorcycle Boy but not before Randy James has been severely gashed. Later, he and a friend are strangled on a night out, that time Randy-James receiving a blow to the head from a ballplayer's out-of-body explosion in which he levitates, his image floating over the town to visit his friends before returning to his body lying in the alley. Steve is personally on the run, facing the major aggressive threat from his father and brother. Johnny is seen at a sexual revel by Randy and also the football coach, who beats pick fights with him after he has clearly expressed Johnny's disapproval. Johnny's unadvised freedom threatens their finally structured lives.

Motor bikes represent that freedom and power. The Motorcycle Boy has made his cross-country trips and Randy-James realizes he has to do the same. After at first rejecting Steve's flamboyant advances, Yucky agrees them when Steve shows her his extended bike and takes her for a ride. Tracy's first adrenaline-pumping moment with Johnny is the film's when he rides his bike directly at her car. She watches him later riding away after making love to his waitress girlfriend in the back of the diner, and immediately refuses Randy's advances in her car. Tracy and Johnny begin to chase dreams of escape when he takes her on the bike to the lookout. At the point of minutes' confusion in her feelings, she pours out her deepest wishes with her kisses, never coming to the point of worry for her best friend and husband. She watches him later riding away after making love to his waitress girlfriend in the back of the diner, and immediately refuses Randy's advances in her car. Tracy and Johnny begin to chase dreams of escape when he takes her on the bike to the lookout. At the point of minutes' confusion in her feelings, she pours out her deepest wishes with her kisses, never coming to the point of worry for her best friend and husband. She watches him later riding away after making love to his waitress girlfriend in the back of the diner, and immediately refuses Randy's advances in her car. Tracy and Johnny begin to chase dreams of escape when he takes her on the bike to the lookout. At the point of minutes' confusion in her feelings, she pours out her deepest wishes with her kisses, never coming to the point of worry for her best friend and husband. She watches him later riding away after making love to his waitress girlfriend in the back of the diner, and immediately refuses Randy's advances in her car.

It is worth mentioning here two related films for their slightly different and arguably less successful approach to similar characters. Coppola's *The Outsiders*, also adapted from a S. E. Hinton novel, was made immediately prior to *Rumble Fish*. It takes the same characters some months later, when they are in the same class. Ken Cameron's *Crime of the Decade* was made after *Fast Talking*, again with many of the same cast, as an ABC television.

In *The Outsiders*, Coppola more obviously pays homage to classic Hollywood narrative cinema, with militantly-filtered color and atmospheric Panavision images and an emotion-charged, straightforward narrative of socially divided teenage angst in the early 1960s. The only "The Outsiders" film on screen as it did "Gone With the Wind", whose look is used by one of the main characters. Although the film is about breaking down the social barriers that separate the "Greasers" from the "Socs" and keep them at each other's throats, it endorses group solidarity, the sense of belonging to a group or past group. Ponyboy (C. Thomas Howell) and Johnny (Ralph Macchio), on the run after Johnny was killed a Soc in self-defense, rescue some small children from a burning church. Dallas (Matt Dillon) helps against his better judgment and gets caught in the collapsing building with Johnny. Dallas takes that as proof that it is not worth helping anybody and, after Johnny's death, tries to escape by himself, noting a score and making a run for it, only to be shot by the police.

Crime of the Decade is set in a less-confined but still characterful realistic housing estate on the outskirts of Sydney. Its chief characters are Steve (Mark Davy), who lives in a community centre for homeless youths, and Elly (Tommy Llewellyn), who moves in there after her step-father sexually abused her and the rowns to support from her mother. Almost instant are



Tracy (Joanne French) and Johnny: "I might like you better if we slept together." Rumble Fish



Ruby-Jones and his straboch (John Grogan) *Fast Talking*.

the north in this community. A successful building contractor, Laurie Fletcher (John Grogan), is running for state parliament in the elections. When not making hollow speeches about post-war unemployment he is satirically preening over an endless dinner party in his home, gossiping about fire wars and fielding challenges from his friends about what he intends to do for the poor and disadvantaged. Steve and Elly, too, have some dreams of a better life as they jockey the landscape and distant skyscrapers from a high vantage point on top of a water tower. They dare each other to commit a double suicide, but choose to live. It seems they may do a hand towards an eventual escape, but the accidental death of a friend, Rolly (Paul Smith), drives Steve to shoot the politician and, unlike the open ending of *Fast Talking*, a freeze frame on this Steve's face endorses his life against have been effectively closed off at this point.

All three films demonstrate a fundamental difference between American and Australian cinema. Coppola's and Foley's films produce a disjunctive and heightened sense of 'reality'. The audience is made to feel it is being offered a viewpoint and cinematic experience of manipulated sounds and visions which sell a story and are an entertainment in themselves. It is important to American audiences that money (as it seems to have been said on production values).

Cameron's films are well-paced, edited and directed without gradually themselves to be 'real'. Both are most concerned with drawing identifiable teenage characters and realistically representing their contemporary problems. Perhaps this reflects a need for Australian audiences to see themselves as they are and the notion of documentary realism being more worthwhile than 'art' or fictional flights of fancy. *Fast Talking* and *Crime of the Decade*



Johnny peels up his successful father (Graham Matthews) from the car works *Rebels*.

also demonstrate the difference in directing similar material for cinema and television. *Fast Talking* achieves its story through more scenes and intricate shooting, and its narrative drive avoids long dialogue scenes. The wrong power in *Crime of the Decade* and the loose focus from the previous documentary tradition which allows presentation of the story's more social aspects. Elly's sexual assault by her employer, Steve's by his brother and Rolly's death by petrol-suffling, all powerfully dramatic scenes that *Fast Talking* doesn't attempt to approach.

It would be noted that neither *Rumble Fish* nor *Rebels* have been financially successful in their American release. For the mass audience proved to the *Parky's* approach to teenage films, Coppola's punching them in the eye with style must be more than a few degrees away from easy acceptability, and *Rebels*, oddly enough, has gathered some criticism for having a 'hard' cynicism rather than the subversive one has by canonized American third-wave film away films in 1984 and with the best burning his house down and striking a blonde cheerleader away from her class-cut, arranged much!

That *Fast Talking*, *Rumble Fish* and *Rebels* all succeed at stimulating photos of cinema happy proves there is no main way to make a serious film. A small industry like Australia's has little buy-way towards large scale experimentation. *Fast Talking* exemplifies the small, lively contemporary film with the best chance of interest in its home territory. A large-budget fantasy such as *Raiders* has the better chance of success in the world market. The trick might be to merge the two, and get it right.

Meanwhile, the motor-cycle boys are back, and hopefully one can look forward to the return of the road movie.

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Steve is attacked by his drunk father (Peter Asher) *Fast Talking*.



Michael Pattinson and Jan Sardi

As the result of a lively introduction at a party several years ago, Michael Pattinson discovered that Jan Sardi had an idea for a script that could suit his requirements for a 40-minute short. Their collaboration became the feature *Moving Out* (1982), which Pattinson co-produced with Jane Ballantyne.

The film was Pattinson's debut as a feature director, though he had directed episodes of *Prisoner*, *The Young Doctors*, documentaries and commercials. For Sardi, *Moving Out* was the first step on a road that would gradually draw him away from high-school teaching.

When their next collaboration, on *Street Hero*, had developed the script to an advanced stage, they approached entrepreneur Paul Dainty and proposed his backing of the project, to be produced by Julie Morron, with Dainty as the executive producer. According to Pattinson, Dainty had been looking for a suitable script and *Street Hero*'s combination of a montage style with a rock music soundtrack provided an ideal opportunity for him to combine his existing business with a film venture.

Sardi and Pattinson are currently preparing another project: *Just Friends*, an episode in the "Winners" series for the Australian Children's Television Foundation, to be produced by Jane Ballantyne.

Sardi is also developing a script for PBL Productions, which will be produced by Richard Brennan. The tale, which Sardi describes as a "classic road film", traces the relationship between a mild-mannered accountant and an escaped prisoner who takes him hostage for six days.

Pattinson confesses to walking around the block a lot at night, mulling through a variety of ideas for a new feature and trying to find the one that can undermine "whatever it is out there who is paying people not to go to the cinema".

Pattinson and Sardi are interviewed by Debi Esker.

Vinnie (Vince Colosimo) is a character in the tradition of James Dean and Marlon Brando, a rebel hero. For the first 18 minutes of the film he doesn't talk, then, the information that he stopped talking for six months after his father died is revealed. Why did you like that direction with his character development?

Sardi: I think it is interesting to build a picture of someone and then slowly reverse or undermine it. Everyone has weaknesses, all the tough kids who hang around desks as the center can be vulnerable. When you build as deep, on the classic tradition of a rebel hero, you have to go into more detail. This guy has a life, he comes from somewhere, he has a mother and father. Slowly you start to reverse that first impression. That is much more interesting than creating a character who is all white because the audience hasn't anywhere to go with him.

If you start off with Vinnie, who doesn't talk, you can slowly start to chip away at him. You realize that he has weaknesses and is a sensitive character: he needs to be nurtured and tells her stories. So, you slowly start to involve the audience.

The scene in which Vinnie tells the bedtime story about a boy who achieves an impossible dream links directly with the last sequence of the film in which Vinnie literally dies above his environment...

Pattinson: It is a key scene. Jan set out to write a diary-like, which could be an allegory of what the film is about, expressed by the line: "No," he said to the fairy,

"only birds can fly", and the fairy said: "No, you are too if you really want to." So he got up in a big tree and he flapped his arms harder and harder and harder and he did."

That is the message of the film. Sardi: If you look at it partly on a character level, we wanted a scene which shows he is a fairly weak-hearted kid. But it is also talking the script a stage further. The last story incorporates the element of poetry — of condensing and heightening things. He could have told his sister any story at all, and the audience would have said, "Yes, he is a nice character", but the story is carefully chosen. It is similar to poets using words to try to find the right feeling.

On another level "Street Hero" fits in with a cycle of youth films such as Francis Ford Coppola's "Rumble Fish" and "The Outsiders", and Ken Cameron's "Fast Talking". Often in films of that genre, the only possible solution for the main character is to leave town in order to make a new life for himself, though his fate is ambiguous. The difference in "Street Hero" is that Vinnie and Gloria (Suey Thornton) decide to stay. It is a bit more optimistic about the possibilities of their remaining there. "Fast Talking", "Rumble Fish" or "The Outsiders"...

Pattinson: Yes, at the end of the film he has turned his back on one side of his life, the crime element. Vinnie has rejected the path he could have taken if he had followed in his father's footsteps, and he said Gloria have the courage to face the future. It is an emotional scene, he has travelled an emotional



Vince Colosimo as Vince: "He's out of their lives young men" quines Michael Pattinson's Vince here



George (Vic Marmiro) more Vince as he is professional fighter, the Vince's father, Anne Rose

most way from the beginning of the film, although it is only a tiny distance in physical terms.

Sardi: It also has a lot to do with kids: there are a lot of films that portray kids getting out and doing things, but the kids who watch the films have to go back to the blowing Commission film, they have to go back to their problems. The film is saying that the escape route is within yourself, it is not out there somewhere. I think that probably appeals to kids.

Pattinson: Kids are cynical. We could have ended the film by showing Vince going on to be a famous rock 'n' roll star. It is an obvious way to conclude the film, but kids aren't that stupid. They are not going to believe for one second that if I go and pick up a drink for this week I am going to be playing at the Hollywood Bowl the next.

You have cast Vince Colosimo as the antagonist in "Missing Out" and again in "Street Hero." What are his qualities as an actor which make him so central to your work?

Pattinson: I have to use a cliché, but I think he has natural ability, to use another cliché, he has a screen presence. He has all of those "angry young men" qualities which make great hero characters for films: an adolescent man with a lot of innering inside, waiting to get out.

The other appealing thing about working with a kid such as Vince is that he is very raw as an actor. He has very little craft, which makes him malleable, and he is able to be a lot more spontaneous. He can only bring to the performance the things that are real to him, and

that is an ability many people don't have.

Does it make it harder for him working with experienced actors such as Sandy Gore, Sigrid Thomson and Bill Hunter?

Pattinson: I expect it does, but I don't think it does him in the slightest because he has learnt a considerable amount about filmmaking and how to behave on a film set. Moving Out, on the other hand, was very different. Very few of the kids had ever acted before, so we worked with more approximation. Their timing and rhythm may not have been spot on, but we can polish that up later in a cutting room.

Sandy Gore is another example of an actor who was cast in both films playing a similar kind of role: a sympathetic, perceptive teacher; a positive influence. . . .

Sardi: In all the traditional films about rebels there is the good woman. In Street Hero there are three: Bonnie (Sandy Gore), Gloria and Vince's mother (Pam Toppan). It is almost a 1940s or 1950s romantic concept of the woman trying to save the rebel from himself or from other people.

Apparently Thomson was introduced in the role of Gloria because of a desire to move away from period drama to something more contemporary. Is that one of the reasons that you decided to use her?

Pattinson: Principally, I thought Sigrid would play it very well,

though I also wanted to see her do something radically different. She would probably support those views. But the two go hand in hand, because quite often when someone does something totally different it becomes a refreshing change. They can bring something unexpected to it.

Is it an advantage when writing a screenplay to have an idea of which actor is going to play a particular part?

Sardi: Yes. If you know them, the way they speak and the way they look, you can visualize a lot more. The process of writing is really recording a film or a scene which is already in your head, by putting it down on paper in order to share it with everyone else. So if you can visualize the people in it, you can use that to your advantage. Especially with Vince, just the way he talks, his expressions and rhythms, are ideal when you are dealing with kids. And there is a certain looseness and spontaneity in the way they talk that Vince can project. It is the naturalness which you try to capture.

What were the elements of Gloria's character that were central to the narrative?

Sardi: Gloria's character in the early drafts of the script was far more detailed. There were probably two stories in Street Hero. We couldn't have made both of them because we would have had a two-and-a-half-hour film, and we wanted to work within 95 to 100 minutes, which I think is suitable for kids. Gloria had a fairly ex-

cellent background: she spent most of her time in the flats and her mother too off, taking her two kids. But none of this really counts out in the film.

Some of it is implied. . . .

Sardi: Well, that's good because I think that the important thing is to try to give audiences rather than spell things out. I don't think we need to know everything about Gloria.

It is interesting that the audience doesn't see her father. He is discussed, but there isn't a shot of him. . . .

Sardi: He was there originally, but we got rid of him. We had a very long first draft. We wrote a quite nice which was the struggle of the film. We had the story of the band, we had Vince's story and the night life and his struggle, and we had Gloria's story, intertwined as that it happened on his strange, but also as a story in its own right. For our focus, it was inevitable that the strengths of the film were the night life and Vince's struggle. Everything was directed towards that and we held back on anything which didn't throw light on it.

The many articles written about you describe you as being very open to script changes and suggestions from the actors. Is that accurate?

Pattinson: I suppose so, but I don't think that an improvisational style, without preparation, works very successfully with kids.

and particularly with saturated actors. I don't think I am any better a director with kids than anyone else. What makes it work is if you go about it the right way. It is important to take the time to explore before you shoot, and to conduct workshops with kids, which we have done on *Moving Out*, and *Street Hero*. Jon's brother, Peter Sanki, is an actor and does a lot of work with the kids as preparation. It became more involved in pre-production continued to the point where we were to make formalized rehearsal, closer to shooting the film. I certainly think that if you want the best out of them you have to give them a great deal of room in which to move. But I don't look at the shooting of the film as a situation where we spend a lot of time exploring.

How did the workshops function? How did you get the kids into the right frame of mind to work on the film?

Pattinson: I look at workshops in an informal sense. It may be playing pinball or being in a room discussing things in great detail and doing improvisation. A lot of the kids probably thought, "Why are we doing this?", but it became more apparent as we started to channel the things that most related and fused them with the characters they were expected to play in the film. It is very much a discovery exercise, looking at things and saying, "You can see that there."

Does it give you more confidence?

Pattinson: I think it gives the kids more confidence because they become involved with each other, and probably with me as the director, and feel a bit more relaxed and trusting.

When you walk down the street you are the most marvelous performance in front of you and you think, "If that could be a film, it would be fantastic." All you have to do to capture it as film is either hide the film crew or make the people feel relaxed enough to be themselves. So much about acting is being yourself.

With both your films, a number of scenes occur in the cast and crew credits. Do you see yourself working with a repertory-like structure?

Pattinson: Certainly there are people on both sides of the camera involved in both films. I want to the idea of a repertory group of actors, but not to the point at which what you are able to develop as a script is limited. I am very pleased with some of the performance in *Street Hero*. Vance's is an obvious one. It is through a long association with him that I know what he can do, and this opens various in developing a performance.

Both *"Moving Out"* and *"Street Hero"* pay considerable attention to the education system. In *"Moving Out"*, the teachers are basically likeable and well intentioned, even if they are totally out of touch with the kids' needs. But in *"Street Hero"* the teachers, with the exception of Blanche, are totally useless and, if not cruel to Miss Rogers (Annexed Mingle-

ton), positively evil. Is that a new position about education?

Sanki: Yes. Most teachers are working with the best of intentions. If they weren't, they certainly wouldn't be out there doing it. There is very little joy in it. Basically, they are at most victims of the education system as the kids.

But whereas one could sympathize with the teachers in *"Moving Out"*, in *"Street Hero"* it is impossible. Their dominant subject of conversation is the state of the toilet. . . .

Sanki: Sure, but I don't think that is exaggerated. I have been there—they have staff meetings and they talk about the toilet, or the color of the rubber barn.

They are trying to fashion some sort of purpose, but basically the problem is the system that they are working within. And any real education that takes place at schools is, I believe, the result of the relationship a student has with a particular teacher.

Which is why you create a character such as Blanche. . . .

Sanki: Exactly. Kids who are brilliant at math as one year can stop a new teacher and, all of a sudden, fail.

Teachers either survive in that system, as Blanche does, by creating relationships with the students as they can relate totally and win you a damn. That happens a lot. It is a result of their lack of personal contact.



Working with her intention: Bonnie Cliney (*Blanche*), the teacher *Street Hero*.

Other films which crop up in both films are an interest in ethnic consciousness and three social issues, urban lifestyles and, particularly, the disintegrating structure of families. Are they areas you both believe are important to depict in films?

Pattinson: Well, if you are making a film about kids, it is hard to ignore them. With regard to ethnic themes, obviously *Moving*



Vance and Glenn (David Thornton), unpleasant backgrounds: *Street Hero*.



Gloria: "I wanted to see David Thornton/ do something really different." *Street Hero*.



Bonnie supervises a rehearsal with some members of the school band. *Street Hero*

Out was a film about the assassination of his Anglo-Norwegian boy. It doesn't ignore the fact. Like so many films and television productions, that there is a huge multicultural clash in Australia's society. Your question is better devoted to people who make television programs. Why do they ignore it? Why do they show the images of someone who is not Anglo-Saxon whenever they want to make a television show?

Glenn: Is "Moving Out" and *Vincent* in "Street Hero" eventually reject the paths their fathers have taken. For Glenn, it is the old country and a particular way of life and culture, and, for *Vincent*, it is a rejection of the world of crime. Why does that pattern occur in both films?

Partridge: That is an uncommon scenario. Glenn eventually rejects some scenarios. Glenn eventually comes to accept both ways of life. I don't think it is a shared rejection of his father or family. If anything, it is the story of his disillusion and acceptance of who he is, where his family comes from and what they represent.

A point of conflict in "Street Hero" occurs when Vincent's mother becomes involved in a relationship with an Australian man. It totally disrupts the family. Does that suggest that there is no common ground between the two cultures; that there is conflict and tension which can't be resolved?

Sardi: No, I think you have to look at it purely in terms of the

character. Vincent's mother is, actually, a great deal about himself. He has always relied on Freddie (Tiberio Gaspard) to tell him how wonderful he is. That is very selfish and when Freddie gets beaten up by the country yobbo, he rebels against Vincent's high-handed manner.

Sardi: Those scenes deal with Vincent's mother as Freddie gets beaten up basically as a result of it. In the later scenes, Vincent wants to lash out after his mother dies, but he doesn't because he has been there and he has learnt.

Partridge: Visually, it is more because the movement in which Vincent moves is very disapproving. One gets an impression with Easy Street and the school around the corner that life is closing in on him. It is good to get a feeling of wide-open space, especially for kids who have never moved out of Fremantle, who have never seen the ocean. But it is not something we exploited in a huge way.

Sardi: It also breaks down all the things that stop these kids from communicating. It removes the constraints of the city.

The adult characters are used to represent the different directions Vincent can take. There is his mother in the Commission, Bonnie, Bonnie and music and education, George (Ray Marshall) and boxing; and Cleo (Luciano Calabrese) and a lucrative but corrupt life. The decision that he seems to make is the decision towards the lifestyle that Bonnie represents.

Partridge: I wouldn't say "lifestyle that Bonnie represents," she learns a lot from her values, but it is more than that. She taps his potential and he discovers himself. Everybody knows Vincent and they put him on the back. He is a hero. He finds, ultimately, that he is a very strong person, based on popularity. What he discovers through Bonnie is that you have to work to achieve respect and, ultimately, it is more satisfying to him that he deserves respect.

Music is really a vehicle through

which he can discover a lot of things. For instance, his decision to not continue to participate in the film as something he wants to continue for the rest of his life. It shows that his life can now take a direction. It is like Vincent I asked her, "What are you going to do now that you have finished school?" and he said, "Well, I might go to drama school." But it is not because he wants to go on and be a huge film star. It is just something he has found that interests him that he would like to pursue.

One area of development that was really unexpected was the attention between Vincent and Bonnie. It is subtle but unmistakable and the tone is not just gentle. In fact, it is even humorous. . . .

Sardi: I was talking to a teacher the other day who had seen the film and who remarked that actual scenes often don't interest itself. But we didn't want to get into that whole area — it is part of the relationship. Bonnie is one of the important forces in his life as in Gloria and his mother.

It could have developed. It is that sort of adolescent romance of 42 sexual tension, and the attraction is not only from her side, which is what makes it interesting. Partridge: She seems to realize a lot of her feelings towards him, and to reassess the reasons for her special interest in him.

"Street Hero" operates at a faster pace than "Moving Out." There is a lot more action and a more complex storyline. How do you see an development from "Moving Out"?

Partridge: The story for *Street Hero* grew out of *Moving Out*. If you want to make a film for kids you have to make it in a manner to which they are going to respond. Given the huge influence of the 1990s pop band environment that is bombarding the kids — which is all part of the rock age genre — it made a fast pace, they get abject identification very quickly. They have grown up with television, which is something you can turn up, turn down, leave and come back to. Films for kids have to confront that. Otherwise, kids will not their clips or throw their drinks around. You have to grip them by the throat and say, "Watch this; you are not going to talk."

Sardi: One of the major achievements in making a film for kids these days is to be able to hold their attention for 90 minutes.

The style of the film suggests a desire to play around a bit, to experiment with camera angles and tracking shots, and with editing and use of montage. How can

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Freddie (Tiberio Gaspard), Earl (Dennis Raps), Billy (Jim Fennema) and Vincent (Street Hero)

Sunday Night at the ABC

John O'Hara

The ABC's Sunday-night viewers, too long abandoned to BBC dramas, natural history and music, could well do with an infusion of local, topical, controversial films.

What the ABC Television Drama department has provided, in its recent series of six Australian films, is an attempt to meet that need. The films have been commissioned from different writers, directors and producers, and the results are very mixed. They differ in subject, mood and style to some extent; they tackle difficult subjects, including unemployment, racism and racism. They range across personal fantasies about death, sex and the sun. Only one of them, Stephen Wallace's *Mail-Order Bride*, manages to be entirely successful within the constraints of the series.

Despite this variety of inputs and topics, the films look as if they have come from the same production house. They are tale-festivals rather than films shown on television, relying upon techniques drawn from television. The films look as if they are made on low budgets; they depend on simple and limited story lines which, in several cases, are strung out for too long. Much of the action is shot in television dialogue sequences, with two-shots, close-ups and fringed location work. In some of the films, the writing does not allow for a subtle view of things, and the stories become relentlessly prescriptive, allowing viewers little room for ambiguity, irony or humour.

These tale-festivals are basically single-episode plots, often linear in their development and predictably slow. They tend to look rather like illustrated stories and they demonstrate little awareness, despite the recurrence of personal fantasy. These fantasies are self-enclosed, obsessive and destructive, certainly in the case of Julie Nelson (Chiffonne Newbold) in *Kindred Spirits*, Sir Dorton Serry (Warren

Mitchell) in *Man of Letters*, Mrs (Bill Kerr) in *White Man's Legend* and Alison Berger (Julie Nield) in *Every Man She Makes*.

In too many of these films there is little dramatic resistance. To show the Australian landscape in *White Man's Legend* is not so much to reflect on it as any thought-provoking way, and to give a major role to an Aboriginal youth is not to say anything about the place of Aboriginals in society. Similarly, to tackle questions about racism in *Man of Letters* is not, necessarily, to raise them in very interesting ways.

But the literature, of coming to grips with volatile and controversial issues, distinguishes this series of films from most of the commercial mini-series. *Waterfront* and *The Devilish* being notable exceptions.

The series, and each film in it, was introduced to viewers by actress Wendy Hughes, and these introductions are an art form in themselves. Looking directly at the camera, Hughes produces her sentences as if to convey the impression, and depict it, that she has just thought of what she wants to say. Every phrase and gesture is practised on a studied imitation of spontaneity, as it, too, her hesitations, flustering search for just the right word, just the right pause. Here is an actress, innocent of television naturalism, lending credibility from the theatre. This is an occasion, a celebration; this is art.

Giles Trenchard's novel is the basis for *Man of Letters*, directed by Chris Thomson (Spring and Fall, *Waterfront*, *Five Mile Creek* and *The Last Bushman*). It was adapted for television by Alma de Groen and stars Warren Mitchell as an academic professor. The story follows out his poetic fantasies about women. He is a man of letters, who prefers to conduct his affairs by

post. This is a whimsical idea, but suffocated by the length and over-playing of the production.

The story-line develops slowly, relying on a voice-over narration to give an ironic, or at least self-deprecating, commentary from the professor. Sequences are punctuated by often unnecessary establishing shots in the car, at airports, hotel lobbies, office corridors.

But the film falls down by cheapening its material, trying to score off everything. Cheap shots are piled off as we, and likewise everything is as for girls. Professor Sir Dorton Serry is set up in a common image of the philosophy academic preoccupied with ends and means, fatally involved in structures of language and purpose. The first of the women



Professor Sir Dorton Serry (Warren Mitchell) - hardly involved in structures of language and purpose. Chris Thomson's *Man of Letters*.



Karen Karlsen Rye and David (John Evans) *Man of Letters*

he meets, Con (Genevieve Moore), the feminist filmmaker, is represented as aggressive and libidinal. She has blonde, spiky hair, and wears a short denim skirt. Con's first view of her, as Dorion swoops from a lift, is from behind, as the camera moves up her legs from high boots to denim skirt. This is demonstrating and undulating women.

Another heated member remarks to Dorion that he hates libidinal women: "I like very young, very soft, very tiny girls." As he says this, the viewer is watching a close-up of Con's bosom as she walks to the message. There, one sees Dorion's clumsy fantasy of Con dressed in a white towel, moving her tongue suggestively and writhing at him, then jumping on the table and clacking. The image cuts to a shot looking up along her body, before Dorion begins fantasizing about her because "miraculously unsupported, unengaging camerawork."

All of this is a kind of lower common denominator image, representing the feminist as stupid, yet as an object of desire, both for men and women. Con is interested, it turns out, in what is presented as a usual catalogue of reform domestic violence, social justice, Aborigines and women. These references are placed as an indication of how boring she is. The female film critic, too, is satirized in turn ("I admired the almost epic quality of your film", she says).

Dorion visits another friend he would-be flame, Dorcas (Anne Marie Winkler), who wants to take him to bed, and flashes to him, and to viewers, when he returns. The whole scene concludes with an hysterical scene in his hotel room, in which two feminists appear late in the evening and make love in his bed ("Our major statement is that after women's power never have a breast to suck until they find each other"). He throws water over them; they has at him like surprised snakes and he collapses like a worn-out warrior in the corridor.

After this unconvincing beginning, the film meanders through lengthy sequences demonstrating Dorion's moral collapse, his destruction of a lifetime's letter-writing to women and his chase of a long-suffering wife who has finally made it as president of the local peace society.

Another of the personal fantasy films is *Kindred Spirits*, directed by Peter Fisk and written by Patricia Johnson. This is a lighter, more delicate film than any of the others, except for its heavy-handed sense of a sound up stream of the very old school. The film is more romantic and less than others in the series, but also thus and over-extended.

Johnnie Newbould plays Julie, a dancer who imagines the rest the drowning of a young man at Bondi beach. She is haunted by his image throughout the film, attempts to find out who he was and, finally, embraces him as she meets her death.

Julie is a baffled, innocent woman to a tragedy that she discovers took place in 1938 at Bondi. She appears disoriented in the film troubled by her visions, leaving Tommy (John Evans), her lover and stand-up comic, moving in sympathy with a sympathetic fellow dancer, and given to wandering the streets and beaches, apparently indifferent to the passing of time. She is something of a waif, lost in the film, as are some of the other major characters in the other films in this series.

There are variations of death throughout the film: the tragedy Julie witnesses at the beginning, which cuts appallingly to Tommy grasping a journalist with the line, "You're dead as mine", then, a visit to a street café where tears up the card of death, which she is told, reason-

ably enough, means extreme change, and the is persistently visited by the figure of the dead young man, dressed in glowing cricket whites, like a refugee from *Boyz n the City*. Why he is dressed in cricket whites is not explained. She dreams that she is wandering through an empty house, when the man has standing in front of a full-length window, light passing through like a kind of blue haze. This image is picked up at the moment of her death.

On her way to discovering something about him, and perhaps herself, she tracks down newspaper reports of the disaster, and finally an old woman, Mrs Morris (Patricia Kennedy), who, it appears, was the girl friend of the drowned man. Morris refuses to discuss him. Julie persists, desperately, for reasons that are not clear, believing that Morris holds the key to the mystery.

Eventually, the film cuts short what has become a long and unconvincing story by introducing, with unnecessary irony, the Grenville rail disaster. Julie is on a suburban train when she sees the tragic white figure in the next carriage. As he starts to move towards her, she cuts out to the front of the train and the train track. He is beside her and there is a close-up of the track. As they begin to kiss, there are three, rapidly success shots of an approaching bridge, and then a close-up on a station sign. Grenville. The shock effect lies in the cut to the sign and its association of disaster. But nothing in the film has suggested this kind of conclusion. It appears gratuitous and unconvincing as a dramatic resolution.

There are three quick shots of train wrecks, which depend for their effect on evoking the impact of television news film. The image itself dissolves to the lovers, as they have become, kissing and nudging in a row, soft blue light. They gaze at each other, draw apart and walk towards light-filled French doors, with flying curtains blowing in front of them. The image dissolves, as they disappear, to a close-up of the curtains, which in turn dissolves to golden light playing on the waves of Bondi.



Julie (Johnnie Newbould), part of the image that haunts her, Peter Fisk's *Kindred Spirits*



A film (Julie Nibbeli and Matthew (Doug Bowles)) "transcends on a class horror theme" Catherine Miller's *White Man's Legend*

This cord once represents a kind of violence done to the story. It depends for its effect on a whole set of references which come outside the story and leaves unanswered questions which the film has set up about John's identity and fantasy.

A different kind of fantasy, rather more grim and pessimistic, is represented in Catherine Miller's *Every Man She Makes*. This is a gritty horror story, about a young girl, Alison (Julie Nibbeli), who is persecuted by a psychotic lover. It is a fantasy about innocence and its susceptibility, about collision between the normal and the deviant.

Some of the insight of uncertainty and disorientation are striking shots taken from ceilings or floor-level, a first disclosed in a swinging mirror, changes near on the clinic signs of girl on a swing, not healthy Victorian tropics, but shot from above, suggesting the world turned upside down. One of the problems for the film is to integrate these moments of vertigo into the narrative. But it tends to collapse into repeating the same dramatic conclusion, the girl isolated and terrified.

The people who might support her display a general indifference, characteristic of an earlier generation of nihilism. The police, the legal system and her father superior are all represented as indifferent. The detective, after John, viewing her, seems a great handful of roostered people from a pit and shows them in his pocket whilst telling her about her punishment that, "His type rarely gets physical." Her boy

doesn't believe her story of persecution but the film has suggested he is something of an outsider yanked by cutting from his desk to a photo showing him fishing. Even Alison's father is of little help, telling her cynically that, "There'll always be a maniac like this around" or, "You always were a thin-skinned kid."

The legal system is also caricatured, partly by the forced language attributed to the lawyer ("The strategy of her house has been evicted") and partly by a shot of the court taken from above which shows the court as a kind of serfdom court. These excesses, though, may be directed by a conscious attempt on the part of the film's director to demonstrate the loss of male understanding. Producer Brian Koppelman says,

Men understand only male ways of behaving. Men [Alison] is suggested for the way in which she chooses to stand her ground. The system is not geared to helping someone like her.

But, generally, the changes from on-male dramatic images of horror are more interesting than the on-woman images. Alison has with the men in the film. There is in some degree of falling into the adolescent wilderness. The film is better displaying Alison's vulnerability, particularly in a first opening sequence of water, rain and flesh, which transforms the usual images of girl in shadow. These shots are nicely held and reflective, the editing is dramatic and arresting. Unfortunately, the lighting is not as good and some extreme close-up sequences are ruined by poor lighting.

The film uses well, although overuses, sequences in dark offices, basements, garages, stairwells and deserted streets. There is a nice tension between closed and open locations, between suspense and release.

But the conclusion collapses under the strain of repeating the same suspense moment. There is a sequence of horror shots, cut from the same story, as Alison, driving into the underground carpark, finds the sex her persecutor. Literally, her history of oppression flashes before her eyes as she switches into another car, and for some moments remains, head bowed into the steering wheel, horn blaring, before slowly looking up to see her persecutor.

The film works better as a set of variations on a classic horror theme than as an extended account of female nihilism in a contemporary male world.

The first of the series, *White Man's Legend*, is also Wai Cheung's first television script, and somewhat over-written. Directed by Geoffrey Nott, it comprehends the inflated unfolding of the story. Woody Hughes tells the audience, so her charming introduction, that what she loves about this film is "a mood of desperation and longing, which is wonderfully enhanced by the unpredictability of the Australian landscape". But the film's focus on the old woman, Mac (Bill Kerr), is too pointed and prescriptive for viewers to share in any mood of desperation or longing, unless it is for the film to end.

The opening that is a close-up of Mac's face, rain streaming down her head. Cut to a man-sweep shot, back to a full-length shot of Mac, sitting and fishing line, then to shot of her wife at a window, looking apprehensively in the rain, of true rain coming, of an Aboriginal youth squaring under a ledge holding his head out to the rain. Cut to the sea, a ship, a profile of Mac staring pensively at the sea again, and then to wreckage on the beach, so the titles appear scripted across the sand. This pre-credits sequence suggests a deliberate, literal, understated development of the apparently tragic consciousness of an old woman for the sea.

The next major sequence establishes that Mac has found a boat for sale, that his mate Terry (Derrick Barnes) will help him buy it and that his wife will object. The story is advanced through three shorter sequences: the first, of six



Mac (Bill Kerr) and Terry (Derrick Barnes) in *White Man's Legend*

shore, beside the boat on the beach, the second in the pub, of eight shots, emphasizing the problem about buying the boat, and the third, of seven shots of the two men on their way home. They climb a set of steps, walk a few feet, then turn as far the camera, as if for a public affairs program. This extensive introduction has already given the viewer too much time to think and too little to think about. But the film really loses its grip in the next episode, which is the buying of the boat.

Notable mistakes two sequences here: the men off buying the boat and the women at church. He begins with a shot, which runs for more than 10 seconds, of the men walking down to the beach, then cuts back and forward between the church and the boat eight times. After 46 shots, one is told by the priest (Don Reddy) that "This is a point that they that can be looked for in the sea."

Mac takes his boat to sea, discovers an Aboriginal stowaway who wants a job aboard, and is caught at sea in a storm. He tries to make port, and lodges the boat unceremoniously up a creek. Slowly, like everything else in the film, he declines into obsession and paranoia, raving at the Aboriginal,

Oh, the fish are nibbling at her belly. You know about wind and sky, but a belly belly lives in the water, son, because that's where I live too.

His deeply comic as a welcome relief for the viewer. His relationship with the Aboriginal has remained undeveloped, largely unexploitable. And the trouble with obsessive paranoia is that it is not a very interesting state for anyone else. The film is too slow, its focus as Mac too limited, to allow tragic implications to surface.



Barry John Jayatil, the concerned prison worker in *Crime of the Decade*



Two Mark Davis. Nick (Steven Thomas) and Kelly (Paul Smith). Ben Cameron's inevitably violent *Crime of the Decade*

The most polemical and, in some ways, adventurous film of the series is Ken Cameron's *Crime of the Decade*. Presumably, the title is meant to be ironic, to imply that what once meant have been the crime of the century has become familiar, a part of everyday experience. But one quality this film lacks is distance and perspective on its own story, whether that be ironic, humorous or satirical. The film breaks into two quite different kinds of scenes, contrasting two life-styles: that of the unemployed western-suburban youth, and the affluent, middle-class property developer who aspires to political office. The figure, Laurie Fletcher, is played by John Gregg as a flat and tedious representation of the self-inflated bourgeoisie, preaching the clichés of return to work and independence and self-reliance.

The film interests sequences of the street life of the young unemployed with a loose, contrasting dinner party at Fletcher's house. There are eight sequences at his house, and in most of them he appears with a bottle of wine in his hand, parodying the inebriated charm of the bourgeoisie. He begins with champagne, raising the new member for Macmillan, proceeds to "a 'de shandaway'", then to a pink one ("just more body than a shark"), an imported martini ("pecked like when the grapes are just mouldy") and finally to brandy.

This inter-casting doesn't work at all; it is too deliberate and stilted, too self-consciously making obvious points about self-interest, greed and substance. The cut from a working-class kitchen table, with cans of beer and bottles of wine, to a close-up of prison in lecture is repeated in a later cut from bread and eggs lying in a pot to a close-up of an elegant dinner plate, silver and crystal. The sort of posturing cuts out any analysis beyond what is already taken for granted: that a state of class warfare exists. It prepares the viewer for the final scene in which the working-class youth shoots the property developer ("There's a war and you're in the center"). This sort of violence is represented as a logical outcome of a systemic

repression. The film has the energy of all the right convictions, but must as case by over-suspense.

Society exists in a state of guerrilla warfare, and all the society and morality belong to the depressed. The police are imagined as corrupt pawns of the capitalist power. When Fletcher is making a conversation, he is disturbed by the sound of the youths riding their bikes. "Keep the bloody kids quiet will you Duncy!", he says. "Getting right onto it, Mr Fletcher," says the cop, tipping his cap and scrambling into the police car. "The cop then takes one of the youths home and tries to pick up his mother: 'I like my tea weak and my women strong.'"

Meanwhile, one has seen episodes of unrequited rage of a daughter in a love relationship, the daughter being blamed by the mother for the violence and thrown out of the home, petty vandalism, drug running, including heroin pushers, prostitution among the young; and, finally, the death of one of them from petrol sniffing. These scenes are acted with restraint and conviction, but their effectiveness is diminished by the tedious overstatement in the contrasting sequences at the dinner table.

What the film appears to endorse is a view that no answers matter, the situation has already passed beyond solutions short of violence and class war. It takes up an easy position, allowing the viewer no distance, no ambivalence, no alternatives. The socialization style of the most life clashes with the device of the extended dinner party (and the second level here are necessarily low). The film is too much like an extended lecture in which all the real points for discussion have been taken for granted. Its effect is to promote the sedition from which the young are shown to suffer. Nothing can be done, so everything is excused.

The best film of the series is *Miss-Order Bride*, which develops from an unbalanced beginning to a nightmare conclusion. It is rightly directed

by Stephen Wallace (*The Love Letters from Tarsalis Road, Captives of Care, For Less Alms*), brilliantly acted by Ray Mungah and Christie Ortiz, and written in an easy, insouciant idiom by Robert Davidson. This is her first television script, following the success of *Twists*, her account of a canoe trek across the top end of Australia.

The film begins with the shoreline of Kevin (Ray Mungah), a middle-aged Australian country builder who has been corresponding with several women, at least one of whom is from The Philippines. He offers marriage, it is accepted, and the film traces the outcome of this unlikely liaison. The woman, Anny (Christie Ortiz), becomes a surrogate for cross-cultural conflict, including attitudes in the local community towards blacks and questions of race. The ways in which the film represents marriage is one of its strengths, as are its transitions in mood and pace from one sequence to another. Slowly, a cumulative feeling of oppression and unease develops from what looks to be an easy-going, simple and attractive identity.

The film opens on a shot of the back of Kevin's bush hat, the camera pulls back and out onto his isolated figure in country past, carrying flowers and waiting at an airport. From this characteristic shot, the film develops a nice, leisurely style of introducing characters indirectly, almost casually. Kevin takes to reveal in Australia of indeterminate age and condition, he is from the country, but it is hard to tell if he is young or old, fit or flabby, easy or tense. What is concealed about him is what is most interesting.

The voice-over says that he is meeting his brother-in-law from The Philippines. He has written to him, "I've made up my mind that

you're the woman I love... I want to settle down with a wife I can count on and who likes the quiet life." Some of the distancing implications of this poem are countered as Kevin waits behind the bar, he starts as a beautiful Filipino girl, frisky as a racehorse, goes past him. Anny is quiet, dark, shy and sensitive. The women of this morning are well segmented, with its mixture of anticipation, curiosity, love and disappointment ("You're smaller than I thought").

Then there is an unobtrusive transition sequence as he drives her home two-headed males in *Shadows*. The tone is laconic, dry and understated; but the message is clear. Her voice-over explains her response to his letter, her determination to be a good wife. The city goes to blacked bush, then goes countryside. A quiet solo underlines his return to country life. Small differences are registered, about a dead mole (the "Vermin", says Kevin) and then about Aboriginals they see on the way into town ("The missing link", he says dispassionately).

Anny's introduction to the town, her marriage and the beginnings of life in a country with Kevin are handled skilfully and with a good deal of humor. The wedding ceremony cuts in to close up of a beer glass and peanuts at the reception. Anny meets some sympathetic people, as the air of good humor is displaced in scenes amongst the men that sub-order brokes are presented. A kind of social determinism sets in as Kevin explores nature: the cars. Unsettling intimations become more claustrophobic by the shooting of many scenes in the caravan, as though conflicts are contained within a confined space from which no escape is possible.

Kevin takes his wife sexually the next



Kevin (Ray Mungah) and Anny (Christie Ortiz). Stephen Wallace's *Mid-Order Bricks*

morning in a grim, grasping clutch of mechanical bed, which is despairing to watch, there is then a nice dissonance to a scene of the two of them talking, happy together — an easy, blacked-berry film contrast.

The town's social life is managed deftly, with understatement, but penetrating to levels of psychosis that lie beneath the surface. Kevin is uneasy talking about politics ("They've got to put a stop to communism") and about politics ("You can't have progress without paying for it"). None of this is contained in the film, but slowly combines the theme of tolerance.

Anny's friendship with the blacks progresses a stage with Kevin when he discovers the has been to their camp. Shortly afterward, protesters denigrate the statue of the returned soldier with a land rights flag, and Kevin and his men denigrate to teach the blacks a lesson by shooting up their camp. This sequence is antithetical with shots of Kevin in the caravan, where he has gone to get his gun, begged by Anny not to go. Exposed by her desperation, and the violence of the situation, he turns to fucking her. Several times, the film connects explicitly sexual intercourse and anger with personal violence directed against women and blacks.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Anny is raped by a friend of Kevin's one night when he is away, drunk. The next shot picks up the story as though the consequences of the rape have been suppressed. The camera tracks past shops in the main street, catches up with Kevin's Landrover, packed with furniture, and Kevin talking cheerfully caravans about their future, child, house and her mother's visit. The film ends on the auto-climate, unexpected and powerful in its sense that his will go on (as in before), there are no means of working out this crisis and crime.

Mid-Order Bricks is something for its rhythm and transience, its easy changes of mood and pace, and the way it draws viewers into an understated view of small-town country life and attitudes. It is a scathing indictment of prejudice, violence and racial hatreds, and deserves a wider release than Sunday night television. It should become as much part of the culture, and reflection on it, as *Waka in Flight*. And it does all this without a big-name star and on a small budget. This film redeems the ABC's attempt to create serious notes by commissioning local drama. ★



Anny and Kevin. "I've made up my mind that you're the woman I love... I want to settle down with a wife I can count on and who likes the quiet life." *Mid-Order Bricks*

Chris Muir

ABC TELEVISION DRAMA



*Chris Muir has been head of the ABC Television Drama department for nearly two years. He is presiding over a department which, in the 1980s, is trying hard to invigorate itself. It recently launched *Sweet and Sour*, a rock fantasy series; *The Young Wife*, a drama about a Greek family; and a Sunday night series of Australian tele-features, directed by feature film directors such as Ken Cameron and Stephen Wallace.*

*The ABC is now planning another series of Sunday night tele-features; individual tele-features such as *Displaced Persons*, about European migrants; *Time's Raging*, about a contemporary relationship; and *One Summer Again*, a radical look at the Heidelberg School; and a series about a Russian emigre family running a hotel in Sydney in the 1930s, *Palace of Dreams*.*

*Before taking up his Sydney position, Muir was head of the ABC Television Drama department in Victoria when it made *I Can Jump Puddles*. He was also president of the Melbourne Directors' Guild for several years and was executive producer, with John B. Murray, of *Libido* (1973).*

Muir was interviewed by Helen Greenwood and Margaret Smith.

Tele-features

What prompted ABC Drama to move into tele-features?

They were starting from our program schedule and no other stations were doing them in great quantity. We felt audiences would be looking for something new. ABC Drama is trying for variety

and for audiences ready to have to consider the balance of material we are doing because we have to cater for a very wide audience. There should be some history, some comedy, some adventure stories and some innovative work, such as *Sweet and Sour*.

Is this why each of the tele-features in the series is so different?



The television *Melrose Cop*, Sandra Lehmann, Tony Mann and David Johnson on Street and Star.

I have always felt — and I have worked in the ABC for a long time, and in a variety of departments — that there was an ABC "house-style." It is as if something were muffled, as if the voices were walking around in space helmets. We quote often get away from it, but a lot of the time it appeared as if the material had been done in slow motion.

So, it was important to demonstrate that we were not locked into any particular style; that we did have, in Melbourne and Sydney, a range of producer talent that would enable us to tackle different talents. We decided the best thing to do was to look at six entirely unrelated subjects.

Did the various approaches — sketches, social realist, comedy — emerge out of the producers' interests?

The producers, in effect, selected the kind of theme they wanted to be associated with. Alan Burke was very keen to do *Kluge's Spirit* — his work has always had a lot of resonance in it, a lot of spiritual feeling — and he was very taken by the Trash Johnson script. I can think of producers who probably would not want to go near it, who would want something hard-edged.

As a rule, ABC audiences anticipate that they are going to see "middle-of-the-road" entertainment. As a result, I received some very strong letters about the lesbian scene in *Miss of Letters*. People said it was disgusting and that the ABC shouldn't be doing that kind of material. I think we have to be careful. The scene wasn't there to be disgusting; the story just couldn't have been told without it. Obviously, everyone has different opinions about the film but there is one common factor; in each we are attempting to do something different.

Do you think it was a "brave" decision to screen the tele-festivals on Sunday nights when there is so much competition in that time slot?

The Australian material is sufficiently important to be screened then. We are now looking at another series of tele-festivals, hopefully for the same time slot.

Why has there been imbalance between Sydney and Melbourne with the tele-festivals?

That, to me, is a pity. It would have been kind to have seen more come out of Melbourne. We only did one in Melbourne and two in Sydney. It was a result of limited resources; we could only do three festivals provided we didn't upset the boat. In the next lot, we hope to get a couple out of Melbourne. We are starting our shortly for our next season, adapted from the Max Richards play, *Empire*, about parapsychics. It is to be directed by Kathy Machin, who won the General Union Award for *Every Day, Every Night*.

What sort of budgets were involved with the tele-festivals?

By commercial standards, and ignoring the complex costs system within the ABC, the budgets were \$500,000 on average. They were that fast, in five weeks or so, with small casts; there is really nothing extravagant about them. We can't overbook the budget because we haven't any money to cover overages; we are our own competition purchaser.

You used feature film directors such as Kim Cameron and Stephen Wallace for the tele-festivals: what do you think will be the effect of the increasing cross-over of people and styles between cinema and television?

I went to a very daunting panel discussion at the Australian Film and Television School, with 50 prominent people from the film and television industry. There was very strong and heated debate about the proposition that there might be no cinema in the future, with colossal disapproving atmosphere. Everything would be shot electronically and most would



Top: Assistant Commissioner Thompson (Shirley Darcy) and Police Master Ralph Carpenter (Tony Mann) in *Stark of Justice*. Middle: Alison (Julie Mills) in *Every Movie She Makes*. Above: Amy (Christine Green) right, and David (David Johnson) in *Melrose Cop*.

finish up on television screens, rather than on cinema screens or a proliferation of satellite channels. If they did exist, would also be using electronic images, projected by laser. I suspect that there is a good deal of truth in that proposition.

I don't know, however, how some of the tele-festivals we have made would stand up in the cinema.

All the old-fashioned rules of television — shooting the drama in close-up because it is the medium of the close-up — it's stand to a certain extent. People do expect to get in close when they are watching a television play. Rhythmically, there may be differences in the two mediums.

Miss of Letters is a very untelevision production, but I have

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Robert Watts

SPIELBERG, LUCAS AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

Lucasfilm, George Lucas' production company, has been responsible for four of the top six box-office grossing films of all time — *Star Wars* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *The Return of the Jedi* (1983) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) — a unique and enviable position in the world film industry.

Robert Watts has been with Lucasfilm since 1975, although contracted to work from film to film. He is credited as production supervisor on *Star Wars*, associate producer on *Empire* and *Raiders*, and co-producer on *Return of the Jedi*. On *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, he is producer.

Watts has a history of work on other large-scale productions, including Stanley Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968), Franklin Schaffner's *Papillon* (1973) and two Bond films, *Thunderball* (1965) and *You Only Live Twice* (1967). He has also worked on Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965), Charles Joffe's *The Other Side of Midnight* (1977), and produced Peter Brook's *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1979).

Temple of Doom adheres to the trusted formula of big-screen, big production, extravagant, mass-audience entertainment. It grossed more than \$U.S.\$42 million in its first six days of release — an all-time record. During a recent promotional visit to Australia for *Temple of Doom*, Watts spoke about the film, his role with Lucasfilm, the video boom, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg to Jim Schembri.

Opposite: Robert Watts, helmed by *Star Wars*, top: *The Return of the Jedi* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

What was your role on each of the Lucasfilm projects?

On the earlier films, *Star Wars* for example, I was the production supervisor, working under the producer. All I did was take care of the English end, which was all the live-action photography. I really had nothing to do with the rest of the film. In many respects, that was also true for *Jedi*.

Initially, I was going to go back to the U.S. for the post-production on *Star Wars*, but then *Raiders* came up and I went into that immediately. Being associate producer, I got involved on a slightly higher plane.

Then on *Jedi*, as co-producer, I was involved on a higher plane again. But like the other films I was unable to see it through to post-production.

On *Temple of Doom*, finally I am the producer, and I have been overseeing it all the way. In many respects, it is more satisfying. It is certainly the way I like to work.

What specifically was your function on "Temple of Doom"?

My job was to oversee the film and try to make sure it came out on budget at the end.

After reading the script, the first function is to decide where you are going to make it. I go on a trip

looking for locations with the art designer, and he and I figure out what all the costs are going to be. He does the set and we do the rest.

Then we start from a nucleus and build up the crew. By the time it comes to shoot, I have all the crews in all the locations, so constructing and preparing, so that when the shooting crew arrives there is no time wasted.

The most expensive element of *Temple of Doom* was the shooting. When you are carrying a very high density of extremely skilled and highly paid technicians and actors, every minute counts.

Do you have any creative control?

Frankly, I don't have a great deal of creative control in these films. I am delegated the responsibility by George Lucas to make sure they run efficiently, to make sure everything is there for Steven Spielberg, or whoever is directing.

One does get involved especially in areas relating to post because making cost effectively is creative to itself. It isn't just a case of saying yes or no, but a case of knowing when to say, "Yes, let's spend a bit more" or, "No, we can't do this" for various reasons.

Spielberg is a very good person to work with because he is very adaptive and creative. What we are

always looking for it the best way to spend every dollar we have and to get it up on the screen without waste. Spielberg works that way.

How do you manage a budget of \$42.7 million? Can you give an example of the creative costing you must finance?

On Temple of Doom. I normally would go to the studio at 4:30 a.m. and look at the cost runs to keep myself up-to-date. A budget for a film is divided into accounts every department has its own account which has to be adhered to. You will never get every account right — some will be over and some will be under — so what you are looking to do is get the bottom-line figure.

As we were going along, Steven would make adjustments to the script that required certain additions and, on occasion, subtractions, so we had to constantly balance the total financial scheme.

An example of this was the dinner number at the beginning of the film. In the original script, it was much smaller and less ambitious, with all girls doing the number in the confines of the nightclub. It would have needed only one set and not the 32 dancers, completely separate limbo set, and the expensive spark effects we ended up using. These changes were made before we started shooting, so I had to find the extra money — obviously it was going to be somewhat more expensive. Among other things, I looked at the shooting schedule for the chase in the streets of Shanghai. Originally, it had been laid out to be quite a long shoot, but, without curbing the story for that sequence in any way, we revised the schedule. We ended up doing it actively with the second unit, with the interiors of the car done separately in a studio. The

second-unit shooting took only six nights, which was far less than I had originally estimated and budgeted for. The money we saved there went towards giving us the latitude to make the opening dance number more lavish.

That is the biggest example I can give, though there are a lot of smaller ones.

When I have to be very careful about, too, is that we finish the picture on budget. Steven might come to me and ask for another 200 extras, and I might only give him 150 for cost reasons. But if I go to the end of the film and we are \$250,000 under budget, Steven is going to take to me and say, "You cut me down by 50 people. Why?" So, while it is nice to be under budget, what we set out to do is put all the money we have available on the screen. It isn't as exercise in which you go in and say, "Well, it is budgeted for \$27 million, but let's cut corners and make it for \$25 million."

Why are Lucasfilm productions so popular?

Because they take all the three-minute elements of the old serials and up-date them in terms of technology to make them acceptable to audiences today. When you show these old Flash Gordon serials, people still laugh and enjoy them. But technologically they are very primitive and audiences today are sophisticated; you can't get away with poor product.

Is George Lucas' overriding creative interest of his products a major factor in their popularity?

George has a very clear eye; he can put his finger very simply on what works and what doesn't in the context of a scene and in terms of the way an audience will react to it. It is an instinct with him, the

same way that Steven Spielberg is an instinctive director. It is a belief, an intuition. Lucas probably worked in early film because he has this unerring instinct.

I have worked with Spielberg and Lucas and, though their styles as directors are totally different, they have individually been successful and their coming together as a macro-director. There is a very fruitful and creative working atmosphere, with no tensions or conflict. They are close friends, they respect each other professionally and creatively, and, therefore, they get the best result through their co-operation.

George is a marvelous editor and has always been heavily involved in the post-production of his films, including *Temple of Doom*. There is a lot of creative input from Steven and George, though the main input is from Steven, as it should be.

How does Lucasfilm define its market? Who are you going for?

With this type of film, you are really going for the teenagers through to those in their mid-30s. The executives tell us who is going to see the films and who also have more than one, to get the big picture a lot of people have to see them in that order, which tends to happen with films of this sort. They are a fast-moving, roller-coaster ride and kids tend to want to get on again and have another go.

In light of the remarkably strong popularity of Lucas' films in the film industry, were there any real worries that "Temple of Doom" was going to fail, or, indeed, that anything produced by Lucasfilm is going to fail?

Oh, absolutely. I think it essential that you do worry because the day you sit back and think you have a sure-fire hit on your hands is the day you are going to fall flat on your face. The public goes to see what it likes, and if you get arrogant and think people will accept anything you churn out then you are wrong. Never underestimate the public; it is the public, after all, which allows the film to be made. It is important to go into each film with the freedom of approach and to try to make it the best film you possibly can. It is like the industry as a whole: it is always a learning process and you never say you know it all, because the day you do that you are going to fall down flat.

But there is a strong argument that there is going to be a guaranteed, large, hard-core audience for anything Lucasfilm produces. There are fan clubs, carry-overs from the last film and also a lot of people who just seem to be devoted to George Lucas....



Groping the secret mine. Cherif (left), Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.

Well, certainly, there is that carry-over, but let us suppose that *Temple of Doom* had been a terrible film, it still would have had a great first week because a lot of people would have gone to see it regardless. But it wouldn't have had a great second week and it probably would have died in the third. Word of mouth built faster than anything. A good example would be the first *Star Trek* film which had enormous hype, with all the trekkers and so on, and had a colossal first week, but, because it was a dull film, it went down thereafter.

There seems to be a trend towards big-budget, big-production films? Do you think this might be a conscious reaction to the video boom?

Yes. To draw people away from their homes and their video cameras you have to give them something more.

I don't think the video industry will ever kill the cinema. Maybe people's viewing habits will change as video becomes more sophisticated, with better definition and stereo, but I think there will always be a place for the cinema. However, it is very much up to the cinema owners to make sure their theatres have optimum projection, that the seats are comfortable and that patrons are created to a "right-on" atmosphere.

Video cassettes do have a big plus in that we can advance theatrical releases on them. The tape for *Raiders* earned a trailer for the *Temple of Doom*, and sold very well, so imagine the millions who saw the trailer.

Is the missing act of "Raiders of the Lost Ark" as video in any way a concession to the video boom? Will it mean to the extent that Lucasfilm will make big-screen productions, keeping in mind that the film will end up as a video?



Willie Soke (Cherif) and Sherif (Indiana Jones) in *Temple of Doom*.



*Indiana, in search of the lost ark of the cosmos: Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark**

No, I don't think there will be a compromise in the way they are shot because, if you make it for the big screen, you must make it for the big screen. Although, eventually, all these films will go to video, because that is another market, so because that is another market, as a filmmaker, you should never be compromised by knowing all the tricks in the crates of the frame. These films will still have some

emphasis on video, though not as great, because they should be seen with Dolby stereo sound on a 30 mm screen for maximum impact.

Spielberg came out with "*Raiders*" after "*Jaws*" and the special edition of "*Close Encounters*" had been released and failed. Some people have suggested that Spielberg was offered the directorship

of the film as a "helping hand." Was that the case?

No, absolutely not.

When I first met Steven at a meeting by *Raiders* he was still editing *1941*, and the special edition of *Close Encounters* hadn't even been shot; that was done while we were in post-production on *Raiders*. So, neither of those films had emerged into the light of the public arena.

Hansen said then, I must say that there are dozens who never come back from a disaster such as *1941*, which could be described as a case of over-ambition. When Steven made *Raiders*, we came in under schedule and bang on budget. The reason we were not under budget is because we put the money we saved back into understatement for extra effects. That film ended up being the sixth highest grossing film of all time, and we know what has happened since with *E.T.* and *Polyester*. So, there was no sitting back saying, "Oh my God, what a mess!" and never being able to recover. He just kept back into it — and that is talent.

There certainly does seem to be a pattern of directors who have made successful films and then have come out with huge, expensive failures . . .

No matter what success a director may have with a film, he is still vulnerable. And, of course, some directors are less consistent than others.

I suppose Francis Ford Coppola is an example of just how tragic a director can be. My view of *The Godfather Part II* is that it didn't have a good script and was dull, and it didn't make it because of that. But, I absolutely adore *The Godfather* films and I love *Apocalypse Now*, which for me is a great piece of recent cinema. But, there is no guarantee of continued success. At *One From the Heart*, I spent, no matter how much you spend, the Cotton Club is supposed to have cost \$50 million; if that is the case, it will never get a back.

Clint Eastwood is another example. I liked two of his lower-key films, *Bronco Billy* and *Hombre*. *Twist Man*. They are probably more personal to Eastwood than the Dirty Harry films, but the fans want to see him as Dirty Harry. The other films just don't appeal to his fans and so are less successful.

Ridley Scott, who made *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, is a product of commercials. One of the problems of commercials' direction is that their films tend to be very stylish, but lacking in story content; the director is used to selling something in 30 seconds with incredibly beautiful imagery. I read in early script for *Blade Runner* and thought it was fantastic, but I don't think the final film worked

because it had no humor and nothing to make it. It was an amazing exercise in style and technique, but without any real heart, so being you close to it. It was too cold.

Alien worked because it is basically a haunted house picture set in space. It came out at the start of the Star Wars space boom, but that element and added the alien running about the ship, which is a variation on an old theme.

You mention that it is important to marry special effects with characters and story, but isn't it also true that people probably went to see the "*Star Wars*" trilogy for the technical innovations as much as anything else?

It is important that the drama and effects complement each other. You can't have a film that is just a series of effects without story and characters. People have tried and all you get is a series of effects that are, in themselves, impressive, but that don't mean anything if they are not in the context of a story that has emotion.

The best marriage of these elements in the *Star Wars* films is in *Empire*, which is the most lyrical of the three films. Walt Disney's *Tom* is an example of the effects going in the way of the story and the audience involvement with the characters. I normally enjoyed *Tom*, though I don't think it was a more intriguing concept but it didn't work because of the script. Disney is always working with such bad scripts. It was the same problem with *The Black Hole*, which was basically 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea set in space. Now, finally Disney seems to be growing up.

The violence in "*Temple of Doom*" has been criticized and you have said in its defense that the film's violence does not relate to people's knowledge of violence. As far as people having their hearts ripped out, that may be true, but people know of whappings and shootings. What fascination do those graphic scenes have in a mainstream entertainment place such as "*Temple of Doom*"?

In those scenes, you are dealing with a cult that has strayed away from religion and reality — the bad element. And, as in any fairy-tale situation, you point a bad. So, the director is looking for a strong emotional response from the audience, and you get it by giving them something that is going to evoke a strong emotion. The whappings were a good off on the conveyor belt, where both individuals get to pay back their transgression.

It is hard for me to defend the film's violence. I would say it forms part and parcel of the

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*CMPD in danger: George Lucas' *Star Wars**

BODYLINE

John C. Murray

At the outset, let it be said that *Bodyline* is a very considerable achievement. Quite apart from its efficient management of the huge logistics of producing 16 hours of large-scale television narrative, the series as a conception is marked by imaginative sweep and, if it is not too strong a word, a high measure of courage. Taking as its case the infamous MCC tour of Australia in 1932-33 and the event proceeding it, the production explores a complex of concerns and interests that go well beyond a simple "You Are There" recreation of the better-known facts of the tour. And it is in that respect that speaking of the courage of the conception is apt.

It is, after all, no least daring to base a 16-episode mini-series on so relatively arcane a game as cricket, the more so if the events as given are more than 30 years in the past and the series is intended for international distribution. Kennedy Miller¹ chose not to start there to begin with. But to do so in the series' written did — to employ these long-gone events as a framework for the dramatization of personal, social and political tensions of a wide-ranging kind — is very brave indeed.

Though, in the final analysis, it might be said that the conception is not always fully realized (that *Bodyline*, at worst, could be accused of not being very of use what, generally, is so wanting to identify), and that there are some glaring blemishes of writing and direction, none of these should diminish respect for the demanding task the production team took on.

At one point in episode 3, Percy Fender (John Giza) stresses to Edith (Heather Macphail) the courage required of any top-flight sportsman to risk the humiliation of public failure. That is a point about man-sporters' spirit and sportsmen of which one needs continually to be reminded. But it is a fact about man-sporters' dramatic awareness which should not be forgotten, either. *Bodyline* invites the passage of a large audience (the pre-release publicity was very well orchestrated), it plays its game according to a set of well-understood dramatic rules and, in so doing, it lays itself open to public judgment.

On the evidence of ratings surveys, the risks proved to be worth taking. *Bodyline* not only attracted a big audience for its first night, but increased that audience to record figures during the four nights of the run. But the possibility of failure, even about failure, could never have been discounted.

Without pushing the connection too hard, the sequence when Don Bradman (Garry Swann) waits to the wicket in the second Melbourne Test is an atmosphere of high reputation, pulls the fast ball from Bill Voce (Ric Carter) on to his stump and departs the field in cloud whose can be seen as a metaphor of the fate *Bodyline* itself might have suffered.

It is not part of this article to concern itself with the flux or fiction questions a production, such as *Bodyline* will inevitably raise. Did Douglas Jardine really demand that the great Harold Lawwood bowl on his final over in Brisbane and did 380 Woodfall sportingly refuse to score off the powerful bats? But Lawwood quailed up to him? Did Jardine actually tell Ponsford that he would never play Test cricket for England again because of his opposition to Jardine's tactics? I don't know, and without saying those and others are irrelevant questions, for the purposes of this

exercise I don't very much care. Dramatically, they are powerful moments, consistent with the observances of the Douglas Jardine (Phyllis Worsley) persona the production creates.

Instead, in an effort to impose some order on what is a very large canvas of people, conflicts and events, I have chosen to take a limited selection of episodes in that series as examples. And, in making them, a few ideas are offered, directly or by implication, on the success or otherwise of their realization.

Before getting into that, a quick point. As remarked earlier, a claim can be made that *Bodyline*, in presenting a number of scenes of interest involved in the 1932-33 Tests, rather loses its way. What, when all the dust had settled, is *Bodyline* fundamentally concerned with? The identity of Jardine? Australia's cricket as an arena for the expression of this country's independence from Mother England? The first fissures in the crumbling edifice of Empire? Don Bradman as the quintessential folk-hero? The different class and social structures of England and Australia as manifested in cricket? And so the list could go on. The absence of any clear-cut answer to the questions can be regarded as a criticism, arising from the long-established and generally proper expectation that a dramatic narrative must have a central, unambiguous thrust, whatever else it deals with along the way.

But there is a counter-view which can at least be mentioned. The central fact is that such a conception of *Bodyline* was spread over 16 hours of viewing time, broken into a four-episode, 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 pattern. This made a viewer's identification and retention of a central thrust or theme, even if it were there, very difficult, perhaps even impossible. And as a consequence, it could be said that Kennedy Miller knew this from the outset. In other words, given the nature of the enterprise, the

1. Kennedy Miller: Producer for Network Ten. *Bodyline* was produced by Terry Allen and Dennis Miller. It was directed by Carl Schultz. Graphic Design: Denny Lawrence and Les Marston. Music: Copyright by John Cornwell, Les Marston, Denny Lawrence and Terry Hyatt. The director of photography was Geoff Baines, the editor Richard Francis Brown and David Brown.

producers and their team of four writers and four directors recognized that they could locate the focus of attention on different things in different episodes or combinations of episodes. If, in the main, one's first impression of the series was kaleidoscopic, perhaps that was the way it was meant to be, rather than the absence of a single major focus being something the team strove for but was unable to achieve.

So, without being exhaustive, what can *Bushfire* be said to be about, in the sense of those things it brings into sharp dramatic relief? In part, it is about the integration of England's imperial power, class system and structures of privilege in the pursuit of the country's national game. As Edith's voice says in episode 1, quoting Cecil Rhodes: "To be here British is to win first prize in the lottery of life."

This theme is solidly rooted in the early episodes, and recurs faithfully in the middle and later ones. Jardine's sense of destiny, his vision that as captain of England he has a nationally-ordained mission to re-establish the rights of the rulers over the ruled, is powerfully founded in the sequence of his childhood in India, his schooldays at Horsham Hill and Winchester, and in his striking reaction to a new conception of playing the game: "This country led the world into the Industrial Revolution, and we must now design a machine to win at cricket."

In this context, vignettes abound: Lord Harris (Frank Thring) usually presenting young Jardine with an expensive cricket bat (the award of honor); Jardine's father (Dugan) demonstrating strokes to his son off back bowled up by nervous Indians; the lively swags of the Winchester-Dorset match being played against a backdrop of soft English greenery; gentleman Jardine's meeting with minor Harold Larwood (Jim Holt) in the back yard of a grim tenement apartment to supply him with a new pair of cricket boots, and the nighty written and dictated meeting of Lord Harris with Jardine to arrange the coming of Jardine into the England vacancy by procuring Percy Fowler to stand down as county leader. And set against these are the hastily lit sequence of Australia's prime Bradman (the man of destiny of that sport world) scoring runs in a local country cricket match — all dry pellets and batters and speedy gun-fires — and reverend belted after stumps to practice his drills on the parched, cracked pitch.

Some reviewers have derided the production's use of Edith's voice-over as a commentary device, characterizing it as something of a Kennedy Miller cliché. For my part, the occasional commentary works very well. The intelligently written words, spoken with measured calm by Michael, glosses the perspectives — Empire, history, opposed cultures — within which the regular drama being seen and heard are to be located. Certainly, in the early episodes, it is the commentary more than anything else that establishes the implications of the impending, almost predestined clash between England's Jardine and Australia's Bradman. More than just sporting matters are at stake; more than sporting history is in the making.

There again, *Bushfire* is also about the complex psychology of Douglas Jardine. Indeed, if the series possesses any one strand which links the episodes together, other than the straight chronology of the Test, it lies in this. Not only does the series begin and end with Jardine (in the final of destiny, the man's career ending in a water of semi-bodily rain in India), but the major dramatic moments over the 18 hours are generated by him. Jardine,



Above: the MCC members, Lord Harris (Frank Thring), hand the young Douglas Jardine (Nicholas Gheorghiu) a special gift. Mr and Mrs Jardine (Dugan and Maggie Warrington) look on. Below: Douglas Jardine (Nigel Warrington), new England captain, and Percy Fowler (John Gregg). Bottom: Harold Larwood (Jim Holt), the English speed bowler Bradman.



quite literally, makes the drama and is, with one exception, the most compelling figure of all.

That this was to be so is heralded by a sharply written exchange in the first episode. Fanning comments on young Jardine's impending separation from his parents' care, a family friend remarks, "Well, they say the solitary tree grows strong." Jardine's mother (Jane Hilden) replies, "No, I think you have put the question wrong. It is 'The solitary tree, if it grows at all, grows strong.'" Any character aware when *that* is said is going to be worth watching.

And, once again, it is Edith's commentary that on several occasions reminds one of the well-springs of Jardine's driven behavior ("He was a manner fostered by public schools and loneliness"). A man of personal magnetism, a stickler for social proprieties, remorseless in his loneliness, compulsive in the commitment to what he saw as the necessarily cruel processes of winning. Winning's Douglas Jardine is the bulwark of the whole series.

Though the production is not particularly well served by the adroitness of the relationship between Jardine and Edith—I almost feel any seriously useful point it makes or supports—the intent to which Jardine cast his shadow over *Bodyline* is encapsulated in the ends of the final episode. Edith's voice is giving a series of summations of the fates of the major characters. Having stated the bleak facts about

Jardine's later life and death of cancer in the 1950s, Edith concludes: "Whenever I now hear the sound of bat on ball I cannot help but think of him."

Now, in one respect that is an indictment: their relationship is not strongly enough realized in the narrative to give the audience the warmth it craves. But, at a different remove, the force of Jardine's presence in the series justifies his comment as a surrogate expression of the viewers' sentiments. *Bodyline* makes Jardine important. Love him or hate him, one could not forget him.

Tied to Jardine is the third thread: the figure of Pelham "Plum" Warner (Kipps McCowan), and the frictions between his duties as manager of the MCC team and Jardine's as captain. It could be said that (historical considerations aside) the narrative needs Warner. There has to be some knowledgeable figure to whom Jardine could articulate such things as his philosophy of cricket (and his philosophy of life: "Things are won by pain and sacrifice—I learned that as a child"), his attitude towards Australia and Australians, his feelings about his own mother, the Lords, and his view of his charter as England captain.

But, in the end, Pelham Warner becomes much more than a convenient sounding board for what Jardine thinks and feels. The role as written and acted (a fine performance by McCowan) provides *Bodyline* with a character of almost tragic dimension. Deformed with a love

of "this beautiful game", locked into its traditions and codes, a friend and advisor of Australians, and a man in many ways trading on past and fading glories, Warner is reduced (not in usual, children's confidence to desperate helplessness, unable to restrain Jardine's pugnacious drive to win at all costs).

There are few moments in the series more affecting than when Warner, having finally (even weakly) yielded to Keith Peltie-like of any responsibility for Jardine's tactics, and profoundly wounded by Jardine's decision for him and his principles, staggers half-drunk into his hotel room. He sits on the bed, gaze blankly at a tangle honoring his services to cricket and, dropping his head, begins to sob. But he stents himself, refusing as a friend to give way to the indulgence, and reasserts his composure as best he can. It is a sad yet noble moment for a person out-run by circumstances out of his making, and crushed by a loss holding his values in contempt.

The accumulating tensions between Warner and Jardine culminate in one of the best exchanges of the whole production. The Henbury Test, and then the Test series, having been won by England, Warner offers an epitaph, but highly qualified contrition to Jardine, ending with "I am forced to say that history will remember you as a man who stooped to conquer." Jardine's response? "Well, sir, we both know that history has forgotten you...." Now revealing of the depths



Top: Gary Jones (Gary Jones) receives a special gift from his mother (Colleen Fergusson). Above: Jones and his girlfriend (Gina Naldi). Right: Edith (Gina Naldi) and Jardine. *Bodyline*



to which their relationship has fallen that each should say that to the other.

Clearly, in judging attention as just these three facets of *Bodyline*, a very great deal has been left untouched. What, for example, of Don Bradman?

The difficulty here is that Bradman, in the writers' conception of the shape *Bodyline* was to take, was doomed to be a thin character, perhaps at most an understating one. The production much establishes Bradman's status as a folk-hero for a nation that was in desperate need of one, but his function in the drama is not that of a crucial agent: Bradman is the target against whom the *Bodyline* plot is directed — the focus of it. In plain terms, he is used upon by events rather than, like Jardine, instigating them. And victims of events are usually less interesting than the generators of them.

In Jardine's case, one has to know who he was uniquely the right man, in virtue of upbringing, attitudes and psychology, to plan and pour the attack. Bradman, on the other hand, is under attack, not because of any psychological singularity, but because as a brilliantly gifted batsman he could score more runs than anyone else. That confers his heroic status, but makes no necessary call for him to be defined as a personality. So Bradman begins as, and remains, a figure, not in any real sense a character.

And what of the action sequences, the Test



Left: Bradman just not in his during the famous Test in Melbourne, watched by Steve Above. Lowwood appeals for Bradman's wicket, supported by Jardine in his slip. *Bodyline*



matches themselves? Here there is a need for some obvious concessions. No team of extras, no matter how cleverly disposed and filmed, is ever going to look and sound like 30,000 people at the MCC. And no group of actors, no matter how well coached it might have been, is ever likely to show that very great skill, technique, movement and speed that marks a professional sportsman. So one has to accept the best simulations of crowds and cricketers skills that the directors can provide, even though they fall short of one's normal experiences of the real thing.

But there is an exception, in one device director Carl Schultz uses in the later episodes. Occasionally, he covers the approach of Lowwood to the crease with the camera tracking him in a high oblique angle as the point of delivery, then cuts to a similarly positioned but static shot looking down the pitch at the batsman's stroke. The effect conveys an impression of the bowler's speed and the batsman's split-second response lacking elsewhere in the presentation of the Tests.

Finally, just to clear them out of the system: a few ragging complaints might be worth noting. Episodes 4 and 5, especially the scenes dealing with the MCC's sea voyage to Australia, are rather obese, not done very

much to further the momentum of events (in fact, standing idly on the elaboration of classes).

There are also a few too many declamatory speeches put into the actors' mouths. The endorsement by Chris Cooper (Max Cullen) to Packer, entrusting him to release Bradman from his wrong contract, works well enough, but the death-bed address by Lord Hannon, a couple of howlers lodged with Bradman and particularly the "We Accomish" sermon by Vic Richardson (Michael O'Neill) on his death-bed are rather assembly with the prettily quiet, atmospheric writing and direction that marks the series.

But it is unlikely to make too much of reservations such as these. Our weighing these are more admirable performances, particularly by all the actresses, Dean Cain's sensitive photography, the attention to detail throughout (the careful aging of Jardine and his parents in the earlier episodes in a small case in point), and the assured handling of such large-group interior sequences as the 1932-1933 New Year's Eve party.

As announced at the beginning, *Bodyline* is a considerable achievement. While few Test films, it is bold, imaginative and, in its final moments, wholly engaging. ★



TWO ANIMATORS

1. Yoram Gross

Animation in Australia can be divided into three basic categories: commercial animation, which is the shortest (30 to 60 seconds) and the most expensive; independent animation, usually made for the love of it and for a fraction of the cost of its commercial equivalent; and feature-length animation.

With the notable exception of Alex Starr's work, Australian animated features are made for the American market. This has resulted in a middle-of-the-road style of animation, suitable for Dickenson stories and other classics so popular with American audiences.

As animation is the most labor-intensive form of filmmaking, the quality and style of a feature often suffers in the face of economic considerations.

With the cost of an animated feature starting at \$1 million and with there being only a limited audience in Australia for such films, very few producers are willing to risk involvement with animated filmmaking.

One of the few is Yoram Gross, who is the most prolific and financially successful Australian in this field. Animator Antonette Starkiewicz interviewed Yoram Gross and questioned him about his dependence on the demands of the American market, the importance of economic considerations as against innovation and quality, and the creating of animation with an Australian theme.

By all accounts, you are the most successful director and producer of animated films in Australia . . .

That sounds good but I don't know if it is true. I don't know how Hanna-Barbera or Burbank are doing.

To be really successful, one has to be able to sell a film to the U.S. before the film is made. We have achieved this with *Deel and the Kookis*, which is in production, and with *Dot and Kevie*. We have been able to pre-sell films on the basis of a one-page story outline and a title.

How do your films fare in Australia?

We are producing films — and I don't have to explain to you the difference between feature films for cinema and television — for a limited market. Children's films can only be screened during the school holidays. Therefore, films accumulate. Our films are probably five per cent of those waiting to be screened. If the cinema accepts our films at all — there still are Walt Disney films which are much better than ours, and *New Wave* is a better film than

all our films put together — we are lucky if we can get one or two screenings a day. This is not enough to create a new market and finance another film.

What is the difference between the distribution of your films in the U.S. and in Australia?

America has 250 million people and Australia has 15 million. Furthermore, the market in America is the major one overseas because the 250 million people all speak the same language; there is no need for subtitling or dubbing, as there is in Europe.

You have now made more feature films than Walt Disney. He made only about five, as far as the cinema are concerned, and in 1963 you completed your first, "The Camel Boy". Do you see yourself as a latter day Disney?

I see myself as Yoram Gross. It is no good a name as Walt Disney — a little bit German, but what can you do?

I don't want to be compared with Walt Disney or my films with his. First, it wouldn't be fair because Disney had such big



The playful images of the Yoram Gross Film Studio. Gross says: "I think of myself as a conductor in an orchestra."

budgets and, therefore, made better films. Second, our films have live-action backgrounds.

But, like you, Denise felt a responsibility towards entertaining and educating children.

I feel a responsibility, in what ever I do, to try to be honest. My client is a child, I don't want to lie to him.

We are trying to make films that will teach something, that have a message — and a message is my language in a pop-up way.

Animated feature films are labor intensive, expensive and take a long time to make. Why did you decide to go into features in 1977?

I was making drawings in Jerusalem when I came to Australia. I made one with animated puppets, *Joseph the Dreamer* (1965), a biblical film and official entry to the Cannes Film Festival in 1967. Then, I decided to only make experimental films, which had loads of money, so build up a good reputation among filmmakers in Europe. When I came to Australia I really wanted to continue making experimental films, even though I knew I would only earn a small income.

Unfortunately, I was soon forced to make all kinds of commercial, popular and so on. But I became fed up. I didn't see any reason, apart from financial,

for helping sell a product which I didn't see and didn't like. I felt it was time to be a filmmaker who made only what he wanted to make, not what Mr. Corporate or Mr. Food wanted me to make.

But why feature-length films?

Because they are the only films which can be shown. Short films have no market today, they can't be shown anywhere except in the family on Saturdays or in Ben Mitré's.

So you turned to feature cinema for economic reasons...

Not just for economic reasons. I was to show the film *I made*, not keep them at home. I can sell a feature before it is even made, but I can't sell a short.

Also, there is nothing wrong with features that give more pleasure.

Animators differ on that point. Some say that in 16 minutes you have greater control over your creativity and perhaps a greater opportunity to experiment in the medium.

Did you ever see my short film *We Shall Never Die* (1953)?

No...

Did you see *Chances and chances* (1958)?

It was never shown here...

Exactly. They are my best films, collected around the world, but they have never been screened on Australian. There is no market. People can't see them.

You studied music and musicology in your native Czechoslovakia and you play the piano. You have also liked animation in painting and art. Could you explain how art and music have influenced your filmmaking?

Music has been in me since I was a six-year-old; it came first in my life. But images were always in my mind, as with everyone who listens to music. Although I can show people when I act in my mind, in my experimental films, I am restricted when I am making commercial films. But I can express more in films than with just music. So, it is a step forward.

Michal Števíček, in *Animation in the Cinema*, says, "The animated film may be one of the most powerful means of expression at the artist's disposal, for the animator can say more than the pure painter on wallpaper and, at the same time, can intensify his meaning, with richer resources of movement and color than the writer or speaker..."

© Leigh Simmons, *Animation in the Cinema*, Lutterworth, London, 1967

As far as I understood they are beautiful words, but I don't want to compare forms of art because it is only impossible. Chops was able to say with music things I was able to say with music and film. But I am against comparing what is richer and what is poorer. With Disney's films are beautiful and brilliant — magical, I would say. They are drawn and painted but one cannot compare them with a Rembrandt who was painting only still life, with no music and no movement.

Disney spent no expense in achieving his kind of magical realism, he pushed his animators and himself to the limit. You see the most conventional and simplest style of animation. Is that because there is not the kind of money now in animation that the Disney studio commanded?

Absolutely. Today, the average budget for one of our animated features is \$1 million, whereas a feature for less than \$4 million does not exist in the U.S.

I had the great pleasure of meeting two Disney animators in Zagreb, Frith Thomson and Ollie Johnston, who are also the authors of *Disney Animation: The Magic of Life!* They said to produce 10 to 15 feet of animated film a week,

© Frith Thomson and Ollie Johnston, *Disney Animation: The Magic of Life!*, Atlantic Press, New York, 1981



and earned enough money to support their family and themselves.

Isn't that what an animator in Australia can expect to be paid enough to support his family and himself?

Yes, but if an animator in Australia were to produce 10 to 35 feet a week he would be from heaven. He has to produce 30 or 40 feet a week to make a living.

So the quality suffers . . .

Absolutely. Australian animators are extremely talented people, as talented as those at Walt Disney, but time is important. You can't experiment too much or you will reduce the animator to living on bread and water.

Disney didn't make any money for his first feature, *Snow White* (1937), was a flop and I believe *Pinocchio* (1940) was a flop. Today *Pinocchio* is bringing in money slowly, but Universal could have put the money into the bank and earned interest.

Disney took an enormous gamble with his film, especially with "Snow White" . . .

Not a successful gamble, because he lost.

Financially he may have lost, but artistically he gave the world

something unforgettable and made a milestone in the history of animation . . .

How many times could he lose money? How many times will the investors give you money to lose their money? Investors do not really care about art; they want to get money on their investment. They don't want to lose their money just because Mr. Goetz wants to make art.

So what made you turn to animation?

I was doing a lot of animation in experimental film. I noticed that I could express myself better and that I had more control of the characters than I did in live action films. I was controlling them from my frame and that meant that I was controlling 34 movements per second. You cannot do this with actors. With the live-action and animated figures I make today, I have to take into consideration people, whether they be the actors, or the animators: they are artists with something to say in it.

What kind of control do you exercise over the films you make now?

I think of myself as a conductor in an orchestra and the musicians as human beings who are artists as well as people who know how to

play an instrument. You have one Vladimir Ashkenazy conduct an orchestra. The musicians are not only human beings instruments between their legs; it sounds very erotic.

Music is erotic . . .

Everything is erotic.

Your films are not very erotic . . .

Are't they? You didn't see *Chausson's* two pictures.

Does the strength of the conductor lie in his lines?

Yes, but if the conductor has a budget for only two musicians it would be very hard for him to play a Beethoven symphony.

The use of the live-action background against an animated foreground, or with animated characters, is your trademark now. Why have you combined the two forms?

Once, as a young person, I was told if you have something to say, say it in the form of a feeling — music or whatever — but if you have nothing to say don't say it. Likewise, if you are doing something you have to have a reason. To make a film I have to ask myself: Why am I doing an animated film, should it really be animated? Maybe we should also

live-action, maybe we shouldn't make it at all.

I believe that *Dot* and the *Kangaroo* (1977) should not be produced as a live-action film because all the animals are talking. Therefore, it had to be animated.

Also the *Blue Mountains* in New South Wales, where we shot the background, are so beautiful that I saw no reason to transfer them to drawing. We could express ourselves using the background as it was.

That was the first reason for using a combination of live-action backgrounds and animated characters. I am still happy with this combination, especially if it works, which means the market accepts and likes it.

The second reason is that *Dot* has now become our style. My agents would be disappointed if we came to them with a film that was not on a live-action background. It does not mean that I think live action is better than drawn action, but there is nothing to compare to this form.

You don't think the two mediums, the live action which exists in its own world of realism and the very stylized, simple forms of the cartoon characters, are in conflict artistically?

The conflict does not disturb me; if there is a conflict it is good. Art without conflict is junk, because it means people have

nothing to say. Every form of life has conflict.

The First Feature

Where did the story of "Dot and the Kangaroo" originate and why did it particularly interest you?

It is based on a classic book by Ethel Pedley. After looking at 50 books, I thought it was the best to animate.

How did you raise the money?

From 1968 until 1977, I had been doing commercials and documentaries. After nine years we had enough money to start our first feature and to stop making commercials, which as I said was not really our cup of tea.

I am in the lucky position that I can do a lot of things in film production myself. If I am ready to work hard, I can start and finish a film with minimal outside help.

If you watch the credits of Dot and the Kangaroo, you realize we didn't have 40 people to work on it, so we have now, and that I had a very small budget.

I wanted to write the music myself but have Bob Young compose the songs. But Bob convinced me it would be better if he did all the music. I'm a soft person and agreed.

Then we asked a few animators to help us. I did the main characters, only at the last moment I asked a better editor than me and it was finished by him.

What was the final budget for "Dot and the Kangaroo"?

Including promotion costs, about \$100,000. We did not have the \$200,000 but we did have a friendly bank manager who believed in what we were doing. He made the film his personal risk and gave us an unusual overdraft so that we could finish it.

The budget of \$100,000 was just the money spent because I did not



Dot and the Kangaroo, Greas' first feature, based on the book by Ethel Pedley

charge for any work on the film on an editor — I was editing for 10 months — director and producer. Even the animators weren't paid very well, they loved the story and wanted to do a feature.

Myra finally accepted the film but it was a very hard job to convince them. They assumed it cost a day at most a week in the morning only, so you can imagine, not a lot of children came at that time. Star Wars (1977) was our competition that year and it was screened all day. Of course, we couldn't pay the money we owed to the bank — that is, all the AFC bought the film.

Does the AFC own the copyright?

No, we own the copyright. We are also co-owners of the film with the AFC on a 25/75 basis. I am quite happy about that because at least the bank manager didn't have to go to jail.

Today Dot and the Kangaroo is being shown on top every where in the U.S., in Germany, in Belgium, even in China, on television and in the cinema. I had taken two to three years to earn its money.

The Little Convict

Your next feature, in 1978, was "The Little Convict", again a combination of animation and live action, but this time also using a live actor.

Rolf Harn was the star and for the first time we had private investors — doctors, lawyers and accountants. Luckily, they got their money back. The film was not very successful but the investors were happy, occasionally. Many are still investing in our film today.

Was the budget higher for "The Little Convict" than for "Dot and the Kangaroo"?

Yes. It was about \$300,000. Still, in American terms and even in Australian terms, it was low-budget.

Do you feel that "The Little Convict" evolved in style and theme from "Dot and the Kangaroo"?

It is hard to say, but I think so. The Little Convict had more structure than Dot and the Kangaroo which dealt with conservation and the appreciation of nature, while The Little Convict was more a social comment.

Sarah

The next film, in 1980, was "Sarah".

Sarah is still a relatively new film because it has not been screened in Australia. We cannot find a cinema to take it because the film is not Mickey Mouse. Again, it has some social comments about war but the kind of war in Sarah is not really attractive because you don't see blood or a lot of people being killed. But you do see the tragedy of a love girl.

Sarah was sold to Channel 4 in England and, of course, we sold it to the U.S. I am very proud of this film, I am only sorry that I cannot show it in Australia. But the cinema want to make money, they don't want to sell movies that are important to Mr. Greas.

Do you feel that they are also important to children?

Absolutely. The story of Sarah is very important because it is a

Continued on p. 183



Sarah, starring Mia Farrow, is a story of war and a little girl

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2. Lee Whitmore

Lee Whitmore's Ned Wethered is a film about remembering. Using pencil drawings and a "flickering rhythm", Whitmore has animated her memories of a family friend who died when she was about 15. The only surviving mementos were a photograph and the sheet music of three piano pieces written by him.

*The resulting film won the 1984 Greater Union Award in the General Section. It is Whitmore's first film as director, her previous film experience being as an art director on Stephen Wallace's *Sir* (1980), John Dugan's *Winter of Our Dreams* (1981) and several short films. A graduate of the Australian Film and Television School (AFTS), Whitmore is also a graphic artist.*

The following interview was conducted by Mark Stiles and Glensy Rowe.

Why did you move from art direction on features to the relatively isolated world of the animator?

Out of a desire to find more satisfaction with the work I do. The role of an art director isn't the kind of continuous under which they work just isn't satisfying or creative, you spend most of your time doing menial work. Also, I didn't like the power games that are played on features.

Is it possible that your experience was based out of the fact that you really wanted to be a director and not an art director?

It is hard for me to answer that. There is no place in this country where you can learn art direction. Art directors either come out of art schools, or they are frustrated animators or theatre directors.

Is that where you came from?

I hadn't come out of any particular school. When I walked on to the set for the first time I didn't know what the other people were doing, I just started doing what I thought I should and suddenly began picking up what everyone else was doing, which is what a lot of people do.



The APTS refuses to accept any responsibility for having a course in art direction. All they offer is a correspondence course and a kind of sandwich study for students already enrolled in an art course at another college. No one takes it seriously. You can spend a semester in direction, cinematography and so on, but not in art direction.

The trouble is that not only do art directors suffer, so that they have to learn everything the hard way, but also the crew suffers because no one knows what the art director is meant to be doing. There is no theoretical basis for what you do. It is all on the job training. If you succeed, it has a lot to do with your personality and with your creative input to the film.

There is a tendency amongst film crews to think that everybody can art direct: everybody knows what color would suit the room or what clothes the leading lady should be wearing. But that is equally true in all other areas — I might think I know what are the best camera shots — but professional opinion that I do not interfere. With art direction, however, people have a way of speaking out of turn, no one respects the role of the art director. I know all department's complexion of this, but it is especially true for the art department.

Were there any instances where this interference caused you particular concern?

Working on *Winter of Our Dreams* was quite a painful experience for me, and I came out of it

wondering whether, in fact, I was the problem. Everybody else on this crew seemed to be getting on fine, going from one shoot to the next and having a lovely time. I seemed to be the only one causing the apoplexy. So, I asked myself, "Why am I beginning to doubt myself?" I guess I have got full circle now and somewhere in-between was probably the truth. I ran away to a scene.

But you can away to do something positive; you became a director...

I was lucky in that I had something to run to.

Was "Ned Withered" a film you had always wanted to make?

No, I never wanted to do animation. In fact, I never wanted to make a film. It was really by accident, through knowing people. Film was never a great passion of my life.

I guess I saw myself as a fine artist. I have done theatre design, children's book illustrations and general graphic art work.

So, by what process did you come to the complex and time-consuming work that became "Ned Withered"?

I don't know. Perhaps at the back of my mind it occurred to me that animation would combine the two things I know most about: filmmaking and graphics.

So, one day I sat down and wrote a whole lot of concepts about people I knew. I have no idea why

I did them. One of these concepts stood out, the one about Ned. It was actually the first one which I started to develop as a script and move on to a story board. It seemed to have the most meaning to me as an adult. The others were more stories, quite pleasant and quite sad. But these writing sessions about old people don't seem to be sad.

There were a few teeny people at the film festival screenings. Essentially, it's not a sad story, so why does it make so many people cry?

The music is a major factor: a kind of tap on you.

The music is Ned Withered's. Was that the only moment you had of him?

There is also the photo in the film and a couple of books he illustrated when he was a young man. But the illustrations are nothing special; they are very much of their time.

What was apparent in your mind when you were doing the story board? Did you want to do a biography of Ned?

I was not trying consciously to make any points. I was really working off my memory and the process of remembering. So it was more about that than it was about Ned.

In a funny way, Ned was always accidental: the film could have been about any of those other characters. He became important

because he was involved with the visual arts. It made a strong connection with me and with my making the film.

In making the film "Ned Withered", one expects a film about Ned Withered who really the film might better be described as "Lee Whitman remembers Ned Withered". What do other people think of your remembering?

This map has been totally forgotten. There is nobody, other than my family, so my knowledge, who would remember him. His mother died but he left without trace — like most people.

I like the fact that he was so ordinary, yet, I relate to the fact that he was a creative person who had some of the same concerns I recognize in myself.

Were you surprised at what you remembered?

Yes. And it became stronger, too. Three years is a long time to be making a film which, in many ways, is a process of going to yourself. Things I wrote down were one level of remembering, but, when you start to animate, you get into quite subtle changes of attitude, the way somebody would walk or hold themselves, for instance.

Were you concerned with other people's memories or just yours?

I tried to cut off from their memories. I didn't ask them questions and I didn't do any research on Ned. What I remembered was important to me because it was about that process. I didn't try and compare my reminiscences with any brother's or my mother's, for instance. If I had tried to do that, it would have really been all over the place.

My perspective was what had strengths. Parents, the less I could remember, the stronger it became. There was something about that selection of details, that that there were only so few, that gave me a sense there was a meaning to those fragments.

For a seemingly marginal person in your life, Ned has evoked a great deal. Why do you think that is?

Maybe I feel like a marginal person, too. There is a lot of Ned in my father because my father was very much an outsider and had great difficulty with people socially. He lived for his work. He was an artist but he never received the acclaim he deserved, although he was appreciated by his peers and he made a good living. Ned and he seem to have great traits.



Left: an image of Ned Withered appears in one of the panels shown above. Lee Whitman's Ned Withered.



"The animation is paper animation: pencil drawings on paper, shot on 16 mm with right drawings a second." Ned Withered

"Ned Withered" has a very distinct "feel" to it. What were the techniques you used?

The animation is paper animation: pencil drawings on paper, shot on 16 mm with right drawings a second. Because I didn't know anything about cameras and, more important, was not interested in conquering that area, I solved everything in the drawings. There are no camera movements in the film, which is unusual. For example, if there is a scene, it is done in the drawings, which makes the whole process much longer, but also gives the film a consistent quality you would not get if you were to suddenly zoom in on a drawing.

The striking rhythm is established by the fact that I was literally redrawing each image every three frames. I started to realize that this gave the film an atmosphere, that people were actually walking around in it. I liked that. It was not like the flatter, more graphic approach that most animation houses do. Pencil drawings are especially hard to photograph

but Jerry Cohen did a wonderful job.

How many drawings did you have to make?

There were about 6000 finished art drawings but to get those done was a whole lot more. I spent a lot of time working out the shots and how to fit them together. For instance, whether it was to be a close-up or a bit wider. I enjoyed that part of it. It was like editing, looking down the story board, fitting it together dramatically and deciding what was the most powerful shot.

Did you need much editing?

No, though I probably used more than most animators. Denise Hansen, the editor, was great. She was always sympathetic and sympathetic to the film, and helped me with things such as connecting one shot with another, making the links, using the music and so on.

I had no idea if anything was going to work — I had never done

any animation before — and I had to see it played back. I edited the whole thing, at that stage, with Denise. I was able to see where I needed an extra shot or more time or where something was too fast. Although this is not an unusual process with animation, I may have used it more than other animators because they would have known more or been more confident. What was unusual was editing at that point, putting the music and soundtrack to it, and almost having a film that worked dramatically. People saw it at that stage and liked it.

Then I went back and started refining it, which was the hardest stage. I worked over all the drawings, developing them, re-animating sections and coloring them. I spent a lot of time working out how to color the film.

What medium did you use?

Colored pencils and a heavy lead pencil. With most animation, there is a soundtrack, usually music, to which you work out the movements and then do all your timing

on timing sheets. I didn't do that. I had a voice-over, which I had done myself, and knew roughly how long it was. Then I just sat down and did the drawings. I kept pretty faithfully to the story board but tried to improve it all the time, I ran for the animators take their course. By the end, I thought I had a 20-minute film. I didn't know how everything was going to fit — it was really quite risky — but it did. Thankfully, a lot of the movements are really slow, a lot slower than in real life.

Have you learned anything new about Ned since making the film?

I learned recently that just before he died he wanted to know some money to pay Mum — about two thousand pounds. He didn't want the government to get it. But she never did anything about it and the government did not. What also struck me in his story was that he seemed to be a man with a lot of promise — like all of us I suppose — but who didn't really succeed. I have a soft spot for losers. ■

Picture Preview

The Slim Dusty Movie



In 1937, on a small dairy farm 300 km north of Sydney, an 11-year-old boy decided to change his name from David Gordon Kirkpatrick and become a country music star. The boy became Slim Dusty.

The writing for *The Slim Dusty Movie* is the Australian West, today and yesterday. The story is a soap, spanning nearly 70 years, of a man, his past, his music and the woman who stands by his side.

The Slim Dusty Movie is directed by Rob Stewart for producer Kent Chadwick, from a screenplay by Chadwick. The director of photography is David Darby (with additional photography by Dan Burdett), the sound recorder Paul Clarke, the editor Ken Sallows. The film stars Slim Dusty, Jay McKean, Anne Kirkpatrick, Jon Blake, Dean Cainworth and Sandy Paul.

Left: Two young country boys on the road to stardom. Slim (Dean Cainworth) and his mate David (Jon Blake). Below: Slim sings to the troops on a Sydney-based event during the war years.





Top: Slim and his partner (from *Texas*) show *Kentucky*. Looking for the top in search of a recording contract, *A Horse on the Road* (Pickens, Slim) claims (cheap) sweeps talk stories with an All Rhythmian (Clay Williams)



Above: the gambling, *McLean* (Pickens), *Big* and *Wonder* (Slim) and *Wendy* (Charlotte), *Wendy* (Slim) on their 'Hick' violin show. Below: Slim takes the crowd from the boardwalk of his "All Star Western Parade"





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New Products and Processes

Fred Harder

The following items are selected from products announced at the June Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) show, and some other recent items:

[illegible]

effects. There is a lack of subtlety in most of the sample logo demonstrations, but the CNI is anyway the operator makes of it. There are many artists who could produce stunning material on the CNI and, as the units get into the market, the software updates will make full use of this innovative machine.

If you would like a copy of the demonstration tape, Fairlight will send a Beta or VHS copy for \$10 or U-matic for \$25 (refundable on purchase of the CMT).

Another nice item is the Philips version of the Laserdisc Professional Video Disc player, VP 930. Designed to be modular with a number of options, the standard player is intended for computer control through a serial computer interface (RS-232-C) or SCSI protocol. The CPU is a standard 286 disk with 640 of RAM.



Content of the disc can be from a dump of the RAM from data that are usually stored using data on a section of the second super channel, or by an EPROM cartridge that plugs into the back of the unit. Ph10 supports a hardware and software package called LVS (Interactive LaserVision Authoring System) to produce software to control the machine. This is not essential, however, as the manual has full details of what codes are required to control the machine through the serial interface, and Philips is proposing a standard code (V4 code) that has a number of powerful options.

In addition, there is a Gambock to sync a number of machines together, a Tridock overlay facility and an internal or external remote control. Details from Pi.picoPress.com in your state. Prices start at \$2890 and go to \$4500 according to the modules selected.

A news at Lion SECIO Inc., Port Santa Ana, California announces a significant development in recording audio on video discs. It has been possible in the past to record about two seconds of audio for each frame of video. Now, with the SECIO frame encoder, each frame of video has a maximum of 400,000 samples of audio during pre-rendering and is accessible for domestic playback. SECIO, which converts the audio to digital on playback, up to 14 seconds of audio for every frame of video. SECIO (STED) frame encoder gives users up to 20 minutes disc capacity of 100 frames of audio information per hour. The use of sound effects and voice-over and instant caption sets makes the SECIO system an ideal for the simple proposed to be discussed.

Advanced but not on display at the SMPTE show was the OTAR MYRIO-TC, made specifically for such research. Similar, in most respects, to the SMPN-12 model that is widely in general use,



the TC designation on the MTR-10 is Lo Time Code, and it reads and records SMPTE time code on a center track. The ability to also read frame lines and flag points helps make this a useful tool for the post-production process. *CM400* is available from Klean Enterprises, Ltd., 5 Lansley Place Avenue, NJ 07044.

RH Cunningham Pty Ltd displayed the Sonotester SP 2012 radio stack unit and the Sonotester FM 1008 receiver with Bax population H-Dyn noise reduction but there was a number of units sold by



Microvite slides are used for BNC production. The EM 1636 receptacle and WPT-40[®] have six channels of single-channel operation or three channels of full diversity, for each rack-mount unit.

I saw the BGM-170s in the field for the first time in 1996. I was assigned to



Let's start at the plugs and connectors in the front with the Analog DIN connector. There's an on-top of the 500-d2 case photo of the white and a computer 212 pins x 100mm, and about 80 mm deep. Why it is because I like small things but on most of the stations which are using the 500 with this 500-pin unit is 212. The 500-d2 Type M Fast Input 212-3 female connectors with power on, peak output a pair linear deflection tape handling with a standard 4-wire mono plug connector.

Correspondence: A. H. Cunningham, 140 Rodan
St, West Melbourne, Vic. 3003 and 4/8
Waters Rd, Rossmore, SA 5068, 2004

Of the many edit controllers that were featured, *Online ThruFile EDITOR* 2.00 deserved more than a passing glance. Used at the wireless machines, such as the CompuShare Corporation Superbit and SCS-200, this excellent

[illegible]

Correspondence: Edison Australia Pty Ltd, 28
Level 28, Grosvenor, VIC 3145.

The John Berry Group has announced the sale of a range of facilities: the Aerobic 600 and 2800. Eight hundred was and 2 are shaped only. These are produced by Aerobic and Aerobic and aimed to be competitive with Redwood and Sanders. The


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Production Survey

(as of 10 September)

FEATURES

PRE-PRODUCTION

ANNOYANCE Peter Fonda
Fonda's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Fonda's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Fonda's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Fonda's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Fonda's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.

HYPERBOLIC OF THE OWEN SEAR
Sear's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Sear's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Sear's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Sear's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.
Sear's return to the screen after his 1969 hiatus.

BLOWING HOT AND COOL
Blowing Hot and Cool is a comedy film directed by John Schlesinger. It stars Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. The film is a musical comedy about a man who is blown away by a hurricane.

BURNE AND WELLS
Burne and Wells is a comedy film directed by John Schlesinger. It stars Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. The film is a musical comedy about a man who is blown away by a hurricane.

PRODUCTION
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DOT AND THE BUNNY
Dot and the Bunny is a comedy film directed by John Schlesinger. It stars Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. The film is a musical comedy about a man who is blown away by a hurricane.

DOT AND MARY (ON)
Dot and Mary (On) is a comedy film directed by John Schlesinger. It stars Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. The film is a musical comedy about a man who is blown away by a hurricane.

EMER PUG
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PRODUCERS AND PRODUCTION COMPANIES

PRODUCERS AND PRODUCTION COMPANIES
Producers and Production Companies is a list of the names of the producers and production companies for the films listed in the survey.

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PRODUCTION

ASSIGNED

ASSIGNED
Assigned is a list of the names of the producers and production companies for the films listed in the survey.

R&D

R&D
R&D is a list of the names of the producers and production companies for the films listed in the survey.

THE SHOOTING

THE SHOOTING
The Shooting is a list of the names of the producers and production companies for the films listed in the survey.

SHORT CHANGES

SHORT CHANGES
Short Changes is a list of the names of the producers and production companies for the films listed in the survey.

STARRING GUESTS

STARRING GUESTS
Starring Guests is a list of the names of the producers and production companies for the films listed in the survey.

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- *Filmmakers* is currently compiling information for a national film and video resources manual.
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STRIKEBOUND 1984

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Film Reviews

Strikebound

Dave Kishner

Any work of art which sets itself the task of dealing directly with the themes of struggle, growth and, above all, recovery runs the risk of succumbing to its own rhetoric. Richard Lowenstein's first feature, *Strikebound*, accepts this risk and brilliantly demonstrates it. Lowenstein is on record as arguing that among his pet issues are "films and television programs which remain true to the trade union movement." Apart from the obvious political ways in which such a reconnoissance can be avoided, the principal tools to which Lowenstein has recourse are understatement and gentle, but insistent, humor.

One of the opening shots of the film informs the audience that:

The film is a recreation of actual events that occurred in the South Gippsland coalfields of Australia during the middle 1930s. Certain characters, names and incidents have been altered for dramatic purposes.

Strikebound is, indeed, then, a document, a dramatic reconstruction of events which directly influenced and accompanied the growth of the Australian trade union movement. *Wattle* and *Agnes Doug* played at the film's central scenes by Chris Haywood and Carol Baines are a Scottish immigrant couple in the Victorian mining town of Kooragang. *Wattle* is militant in his fight for better working conditions in the Southern Colliery; his insistence to call stop-work meetings to draw the attention of the pit management to the miners' demands leads directly to a lock-out. The miners' daily ordeal and the pit manager, Birch (David Kuchel), retorters by importing scab labor. The conflict becomes acute and, after such wrongs as tactics in the construction of the pit and an attempt by management head (Chris Haywood) to force a woman's life, more overtly militant activists are called for. The mine camp is sabotaged, the scabs refuse to work and the miners heroically demonstrate in the pit. After two-and-a-half days, the men re-enter, and a closing title tells that the strike has won the mine company agreed to their demands.

It must be said that such a public works accompaniment to a film transcends the immediacy of the historical facts it treats. The *Dogs* are, initially at least, as politically distant as any couple can be. *Wattle* is a condescending member of the Australian



Richard Lowenstein's *Strikebound*, recreating "the world as *Wattle* and *Agnes Doug* saw it." Above the *Dogs* are played by Chris Haywood and Carol Baines.

Commonwealth Party. *Agnes*, an ex-Protestant, is a member of the Salvation Army. The two worlds are so radically unacquainted from the outset and their eventual fusion — when *Agnes* disfigures with her Salvation Army uniform and organizes a women's auxiliary group in material support of the striking miners — that the film's discourse bypasses party politics and depicts realism of social consciousness.

As the real *Wattle* and *Doug* suggests at the beginning of the film, the prevailing mood of pessimism and defeatism at the workers' government during the Depression reflected the growth of social consciousness: the workers needed leaders to mobilize them as a unified social force to be reckoned with. In so far as *Wattle* was unimpressed in this mobilization, a small boy has been sampling for Lowenstein to make a hero figure of *Doug's* counterpart in his dramatic reconstruction. Indeed, Haywood gives such a belated and quietly heroic performance that one is allowed to see the anti-social act of *Wattle* and *Doug* the activist who stands still by when he is not an active participant in incidents of such belatedness and who is hand to the problems of members of

the local police force (and of his own class), whose sympathy with the strikers is suggested at more than one point in the film, but who is not forced by the nature of his job to being order — in apparent support, therefore, of scabs and management (Chris Haywood's narration of this dilemma goes surely go to *Wattle* Haywood's *Police Sergeant*).

To elaborate, however, the afore mentioned injustice which any brief review of *Strikebound* must do to the film, and to its sense of the deflation which such a work, by its very nature, presents to the viewer, one must assume the network of images on which the film is based. For it is these images, and the technical expertise with which they are brought to the screen, which confer on the film an indisputable artistic validity. This is a vast and above the soon-pointed validity to which the film can justify its claim and which, in any case, less long than historically concerned.

Lowenstein has chosen to place his representation of events between two images (both meetings with the real *Agnes* and *Wattle* and *Doug* (both seen, and still incidents, in their subplot). The purpose of this technique is twofold.

First, it lends a documentary veracity to the entire "documentary" setting of *Strikebound*, introductory titles allow — "This film is based on events which actually happened" etc. — would have been inadequate. Second, the comments which the *Dogs* make and which run on as voice over into the opening sequences of the reconstruction, undoubtedly indicate, however and through the eyes of the two main characters, the events the audience is about to witness. As Lowenstein has said:

I had made up my mind to stick to reality rather than dramatize it too much. I wanted to recreate the truth as *Wattle* and *Agnes* saw it.¹

In addition to the intricate images, Lowenstein's film, again on the fringes of the film's central dramatic action, is an act of working-class portraiture, a gloriously stark black and white, accompanied by a near *Dennis Albery*'s playhouse. It is a scene of the working class. These reflections also spill over into the film's dramatic sequence, perhaps, as when the *Wattle* singer

1 "Richard Lowenstein: *Agnes*", interview by John Murray, *Cinema Papers*, No. 47, August 1984, p. 212.

2 There are extremely catalogued as "Andrew de Groot, director of *Photography*", interview by John Murray, *Cinema Papers*, No. 47, August 1984, p. 212. *Strikebound* is a production of the Australian Film Commission, directed by Richard Lowenstein, music by John Murray, *Cinema Papers*, No. 47, August 1984, p. 212-13.

3 "Richard Lowenstein: *Agnes*", *Cinema Papers*, No. 47, p. 212.



Silvius (Thomy Wilentz) and Mirel walk away: "It's the nicest thing to have to see again!"
quod. *Manifestation of a Woman*

paired very much the same artistic motifs and conceptual world-view as did their novel-writing contemporaries. Like Villiers, Vance Frazer, John Galsworthy, etc.

[illegible]

At a distance of more than 23 years, and whether consciously or not, identification of a Woman develops a similar sentiment, though the utmost

The ideological implications of this rigorous treatment are, in Antonioni's case, at least, neither different nor novel. From *Crimes Minded* is a film directed by a man who has been called "the most honest and with only the certainty that there is a particular female fear for his role in it, sustain his search for a story (and the fact that the search of Calisto Tanzi, police chief, is a moral lesson in photographs all possible victims of race, as a substrate for the 1930s—this search would include all the victims of the Holocaust). Antonioni's *Niccolo* frequently warbles before he knows after a notice board filled with press notices and the scene on the same photographic theme: "Herring smoked, dark, and black." Only quickly, the face that his film is about is the face of the woman, the face of the body to which it is attached. Niccolo quietly prevails in sorrow in the sense that to love he has exposure to the face of the woman, the face of his new found sexual and spiritual equilibrium. When Mrs. Daniels informed abruptly disappears — and the capacity for disappearing is just

- [illegible]

which she and Niccolò love each other, after a bitter argument, in thick fog? Niccolò is thrown once again into a crisis which is rendered doubly acute by his having lost not only the "face" he needs for his film, but also the woman who had, in the meantime, become his relationship he had left behind him.

The plot of the film, *Salvatore*, Nanni's search for Vittorio for some unspecified reason, although he presumably makes do with a not-overly-familiar dancing friend called Lisa (Claudia Bionardi, who is strictly invisible, but carrying someone's child). Theoretically, a second hand poverty he does not want, he is forced to leave his job and immediately, teaching to chase a woman-Elena film, a residence with which the mother's film was spontaneously done by a new sexual story, the primary but false makes way for the parents (father didn't move, that he he not

Assignment has commented that on the role of wound in his work.

I always attach a great deal of importance to my female characters, because I think I know women better than men. . . . Female psychology seems so much better able to filter reality and render it *à*.

[illegible]

4. Compare the dissonance and resonance that *Man's Search for Meaning* has in *The Passage*.
5. The journey diary, in its unspoken nature as poetry, may have been a rather good idea. But the diary of the flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea. The diary of the flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea. The diary of the flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea.
- During the flight, not a female is seen, which is somewhat the best idea. The flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea. The diary of the flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea.
- After this, it is as if the conflict between himself and his life. The flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea. The diary of the flight of Man's last hour, or, if it should be questioned, his last few days here, throughout the film, could have been a much better idea.

- ⁴ Quoted by Don Barrow in "Chronicle of a Case", *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1980, p. 41.

[illegible]

In the course of such advanced contemplation, the resolution can find a solution, or at least to postpone it, and the film is not only philosophically and aesthetically valid. For this reason, the film is a text and highly accessible exposition, every scene is a lesson in the use of the camera, the importance of satisfactory resolution in mind. There are wrong movements, "accidents" often caused by the filmmaker, order by dialogues, social stress (violence) blocking down a dynamically special situation in an effort to cause a climax of action, or a scene of violence, or a scene of violence (as in many of the conventional scenes). Accidents and two live events, when the speakers are discussed in detail and window reflections. This latter device has been used Antonioni ever since the early 1960s, it is, nonetheless, a very effective device. The film is here further reinforced by the beautiful photography of Carlo di Palma (who also collaborated with Antonioni in

Nobody is an inflexible member and earth's other creative process, much, anyway, is then, continuously considered, out of context, a bewilderment which Milner's performance is actually attractive. For an actor whose art and imagination lives are so fixed in a single, specific, is a great obstacle that the drama of the nature of his personal life should find in correlation in only half-finished, unfinished dramatic projects, the price for such ego and artistic narcissism is Milner's price of fame. Yet this is a price, Auden would suggest, that he necessarily pays, and a price, especially, that he expects the audience of a *W. Somerset Maugham* to pay, as the awareness of artistic commitment as one is likely to see.

Headbanger's Revenge (Identification of a Wreath) Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni. Producer: Cloryst Neriello. Artistic Mixer: Esteban producer. Alexander von Steuss. Screenplay: Michelangelo Antonioni. Grand Jury. Doctor of photography. Carlo & Polina.

everyone. This concern should be remembered as Americans move on to the stage where the struggles for dignity must be supported. For, as Neibauer has shown us in this film, they are struggles hence one of love.

Strategic no passes. Directed by David Bretherton. Producer: David Bretherton. Associate producer: Leah Cohen. Screenplay: David Bretherton. Director of photography: Geoffrey Stripes. Editor: Steven Young. Music: Louise Anderson. Title: Morris Gershwin. Synopsis: A film about a young man who finds himself in a situation where he must choose between a woman and a man. The film is a study of the human condition and the choices we make. It is a story of love, loss, and the search for meaning in a world that is often indifferent to our struggles.

Silver City

Helen Greenwald

Silver City is Sophia Turkawson's first feature and is an accomplished piece of filmmaking. In a film that is both a love story and a study of the human condition, the film explores the choices we make in a world that is often indifferent to our struggles. The film is a study of the human condition and the choices we make. It is a story of love, loss, and the search for meaning in a world that is often indifferent to our struggles.

film, the women, unfortunately, accept to have that new life on a second relationship with a man.

Here, the audience between the two films and between the films from Poland the audience is left to choose that one (Karin Berkowicz) but the strength and courage to pick up the threads of the story and to continue to make it like for herself, in Silver City one is shown that it is the woman. Whereas between the two films is that in an interesting and very human, closely related to the day-to-day problems of a non-English speaking, female migrant in her own with the tragic climax of being married to a man who has deceived that his love, wife, presumed dead, is still living, Silver City is pretty it and fully photographed to give a cinematic feeling to a story that acknowledges the problems of migrant life but chooses to keep them at a distance and concentrate on the relationship between the two main characters. Silver City uses the period more as a vessel in which to explore the story and as a dramatic device is used as there is a theme in its own right.

That is why Silver City disappoints for much of what is good about the film lies outside the love story but is never developed. Further, when the characters are love story from another is the character in the context in which they are placed, but not permitting the social and historical back-

ground to play a major part in establishing the character or in the making. Silver City moves from reality to melodrama, it does this, however, through a series of strong character choices.

The relationship between Karin (Karin Berkowicz) and Julian (Julian Kasper) is one of the main problems. It is a relationship that is, therefore, understated the attraction between Julian and Karin. There is no attempt to present Karin as different in the rest of the migrants — she is constantly pining for the woman who left, but a great deal of time, and again is better than in her life — but she does not appear to be Julian's emotional equal any more than in his wife, Anna (Anna Jankowska). Not does the appeal to be any more optimistic, supportive or stronger than Anna. There is an indication that all is not well between Anna and Julian — "It has never been quite the same" — and that Anna has aged due to her experience during the war. But there are hints to hint of the strength of the story and the character. Anna's love to his family. What then is the drama that connects Julian to Karin that which he has come to a new country for his family?

Although Berkowicz and Kasper make a fine looking couple in the scene, there is no sense of physical passion between them. The film is a study of the human condition and the choices we make. It is a story of love, loss, and the search for meaning in a world that is often indifferent to our struggles.

able mental situation or even some personal feelings between the two women. But in looking with the female point of view, the film does not present a panoramic, wholesome picture. There are a few scenes in which romance and melodrama play a central part of the film, but these are towards the end of the film and not in the rest of the film to its conclusion.

The two classic sequences in the film are Karin's loneliness, or the country scene, and the scene that Anna is being Julian's child — and arrived at suddenly. In the first scene, Karin is usually haunted by some local and rural life, or the fellow workers. However, these moments in themselves are not sufficient to explain her inability to cope, nor is it clear how her separation from Julian is the cause of her mental state.

It is not to say that the attempted rape scene is not effective. It is a welcome change of pace and mood, and touches on some of the darker side of the film. However, it is an example, along with the scene between the two women, of a scene that is not fully developed. The film is a study of the human condition and the choices we make. It is a story of love, loss, and the search for meaning in a world that is often indifferent to our struggles.

In the second climax, the sequence of events is once again understated, and obvious to the viewer. It is also marked by a sense of the film's end to arrive without warning and with no emotional effect on the audience. Julian, when confronted by his mother-in-law and the priest, with Karin's illness, seems to be without about it and the emotion effects no expansion in Karin nor does she demand one. He then goes on the wrong bus, enters his law room and disappears for the night. When Karin finds him, he announces that Anna is pregnant with his child and that he must return to his family. Why has he not continued to stay with his wife during his time with Karin, why Karin with her suspicions about Julian and Anna's behavior already seemed does not question or pass it as if it is "finesse" means, and why the film Julian goes on what he concerns in the ending but all this is a loss of focus. It is a sense that the film's conclusion, the conclusion of the relationship, has been anticlimactically suggested on the narrative level. Before the audience can see what has happened (assuming that it is, like Karin, has not already passed) it is back to the present on the boat with the two, new ex-lovers.

And this film is an attempt to develop the potential of the film as a story from their culture and their country and apart from the narrative problems towards the end. Silver City has some wonderful moments. As well as the individual scenes mentioned above, the opening scene behind the fence is a delight. The shaky movement of the camera, the momentary misplacement of the film, and the focus of the film of a young girl appears, freer, then disappears in the dark, and the haunting way that opens and closes the film establish an immediate sense of mystery, nostalgia, and story into another cultural world. It is unfortunate that it was not better integrated with the rest of the film, the film, also in including some for



Love without passion. Julian (Julian Kasper) and Karin (Karin Berkowicz) in Sophia Turkawson's *Silver City*



New York Day (The Milkmaid), her Argentinean go-between, that she and he are a "big wonder". Silver City

more conversation, as a means of drawing the audience into the past.

There is also an admirable performance by Boley, as Vitore, the only character who begins in isolation as a way of involving the audience as the director and as an element of a theme. Boley manages to make a convincing Polish accent throughout and deliver an accurate representation of one of the migrant worker's classic tendencies: a driving, non-stop-go life which often awakes from them who have died to it word and come to life. Vitore is the fact for the most dispirited and intellectual Italian who, ultimately, fails to achieve his embrace. Vitore is the protagonist and immediately comes to grips with his situation — "America takes lovers, America wants women" — ending with romantic illusion, as well, eventually, failure.

This is, indeed, another dramatic thread running through Silver City which emerges only at the end. In the final scene, Nina looks with longing and pain to Helen joins his family on the movie platform. Despite having achieved a career and fulfilled her aspirations, rejected father in the film, Nina still wonders about what might have been. Helen and a family instead of a career. Although the two, in the end, have from the same thing, she has paid a price, not unlike of one's personal can only be paid with sacrifice. Unfortunately, the complexity of this message is questioned because one is left wondering what it is that she has sacrificed.

Silver City Directed by: Joseph Teresi
 Story: Producer: Joe Long
 Screenplay: Joseph Teresi, Peter Koster
 Director of photography: John Dele
 Editor: Don Scuderi
 Art director: Lee
 Set: Mary Wilson
 Music: Sound
 mounted: Mark Lewis
 Cost: Costa
 Editor: Peter Koster, Joe Long
 Actor: Alicia (Alicia), Steve Boley (Vitore), Dennis Lawrence (Helen), Eric
 Bink (Mike Brown), Joe Cohen
 (David) The Milkmaid (Day) (Alicia)
 Screenplay: Joseph Teresi
 Company: Cineplex
 Production: Cineplex
 Distribution: Cineplex
 1991

This pioneering director, compared to the Christian religion, presents Ernesto Guevara's *Carmine*, a film which Guevara has written, directed, produced, adapted, photographed, and designed and cast some characters. Like his previous work, *Unholy High* (1978), Guevara has once again cast his film entirely from non-professionals, this time some villagers from Vitore's in Tuscany where "the film of the people remained one of the Guevaras, in recent Italian film".

In the Tuscany village during the Middle Ages, a group of peasants prepare a peasant play based on the three most men and the peasants who followed them into Jerusalem. A speaker's voice warns that the play will be a mixture of "folk, fiction and the imagination".

This scene sets a cultural context against the village, setting against "the heavenly realm" — surely a sign from God is proclaimed in the Scriptures, announcing the arrival of his Son on Earth. In the village, the local was once, Mid, a flock of simple peasants, a commoner and a royal courtier. Mid's gift of a golden ring to begin a pilgrimage in search of the Messiah.

Joined by two wives from the court, each Mid by a wife and their spouse brings them to Herod's court, where there were a pointed with great suspicion. But they then trade to a road and overcome each, where they eventually discover a "queen" family and that new king was. His pilgrims appear, for this early man be the son of God.

Forced by Herod's preparations for war, the wife was pressed by

have right to a divine marriage and extract the pilgrims to Cyprus. But some of the hand held. They have seen the wife men and the gold coins they carried as offerings for the Lord and lost for new-born child has been left in mortal danger. One of the soldiers pilgrims ride back to the castle and, in the dawn light, finds the ground strewn with bodies — the massacre of the innocents.

Carmine, examines a about the betrayal of the Mass that there were men who converted people into respectable souls and had a desperate need of payment with the promise of salvation from the material and spiritual poverty of their lives.

The central figure among Guevara's was more in Mid — philosopher, scholar, astronomer and priest — a man representing intellectual power, who can no longer distinguish between his own self-importance and the reality of the world around him.

Approaching and embracing, Mid's religious faith is not beyond the most acute awareness of his audience. As the pilgrims stand in the "heavenly", one of the hand held Mid whether this child of a "queen" simple can really be the Messiah. "We must not be if we were", replies Mid. "We have no choice but to believe in this certainty."

Despite their doubts and the obvious skepticism of the masses, the three wife men, in the presence of their charismatic power over the pilgrims, achieve the discovery of the Child with mystical acceptance, the discovery of three flesh among them is finally by the foundations of the future Church on rocky ground.

Mid's personal intellectual dependency (just again when, having for his own life at the hands of Herod's



Mid (Alberto Fumagalli), centre, prepares for a ritual slaughter in thanks for the woman's escape from pursuing heretics. *Carmine* Guevara, *Carmine*

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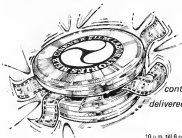
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Book Reviews

Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years

Graham Shirley and Brian Adams
Currency Press in conjunction
with Angus & Robertson
Publishers, 1984
Hardback, 338pp, AS\$24.95
ISBN 0 207 145814

Red Bishop

In 1971, Frank Minster John Gorton, a fan of Westerns and private eye movies, oversaw the establishment of the Australian Film Development Corporation. At the time, Gorton expressed his desire for the AFDC to prove to the rest of the world that Australia was capable of producing films containing "value things that could provide language and had style."

Gorton's sons, noted perhaps at British director John Boag and Tony Richardson, understand the strong sentiment behind their own *Heavenly Creatures*. *The First Eighty Years*, this admirable history from Graham Shirley and Brian Adams.

National sentiment is only one of the elements back into the historical perspective and by the authors. And, where Shirley and Adams stick rigidly to conventional methods, their work is clear, comprehensive and precise. A history of the production, exhibition and distribution wings of the Australian film industry between 1896 and 1975, in which a context of the prevailing economic conditions and changing government attitudes. Shirley and Adams have not written the book for readers whose sole interest lies with the content of the films. They are content to offer plot synopses and occasional comments as to the relative critical and commercial success of any particular film. Individual filmmakers are generally only profiled when they constitute contributors have developed conceptual techniques or raised the production standards of the industry. The authors also recognize film workers who have made significant contributions towards looking for an indigenous industry.

They book contains an impressive use of primary source material, particularly personal interviews, newspapers, magazines, diaries and private letters. It includes excellent coverage of the 1926 Royal Commission and the 1972 Tariff Board Inquiry. Adams and Shirley have carefully drawn out the essential historical facts for much use, giving the book value in both a comprehensive historical account and as essential reference work.

It is only the authors' strict adherence to minimalist chronology that gives the book an occasional pedantic tone. But the craning of any lead history is dominated by constraints and conventions, and, where the

authors have chosen to stay within that framework, the result is a well-balanced historical overview.

This achievement is not as great as it seems in the first two sections. Part One covers a 33-year period from 1896 to 1929 and Part Two chronicles the 34 years from 1929 to 1964. There are sections contribute more than 15 per cent of the book, and are greatly helped by the authors' strong national sentiments, as evidence when they quote Queen Spencer's comment, in 1914, at "Australia's become a dumping ground for all the products in the world."

The history of exhibition and distribution is heavily well-detailed, and the success of the 1926 Royal Commission, with its reports of quotas and tariff protection, and the subsequent success by Australian producers toward American control of the industry are also well documented. In the mid-1920s, Americans managed to secure a lucrative broadcast pilot for the successful *Conrad* film industry, leaving under that country's economic control. Thus, it seems to no surprise to learn from Shirley and Adams that by 1927 nearly 95 per cent of the films shown in Australia were American in origin.

Shirley and Adams give a detailed and well-balanced view of the industry's past. The contributions of Raymond Longford, Benjamin Smith, Charles Chauvel, Lance Lyns, Frank Bennett, the McDougall Sisters, Frank Harley, Elmer Film Productions, Ken Hall, Cassius, Eric Porter, John Hynes, Les Robinson and Cheri Astor (among others) are evaluated with the value document accuracy is a fully detailed, historical account.

The third and shortest part of this volume covers the years 1965 to 1975, ending when "the industry's formerly separate artistic and commercial achievements were merged in *Splash* To Be Free" (Lyns and three authors in tone). Shirley and Adams give a light and coverage of the industry's revival.

Of particular value is the spine devoted by the authors to detailing

the contributions of the "sociological cinema" of the 1960s, and an important transformation during the early 1970s into a varied, exciting and energetic independent cinema.

In the early part of this section, emphasis is given to the work of the early pioneers, mainly men: Allan Traill, Arthur and Conrad Curran, Arno Rode, Fred Waddell, the Ulan Film group and the formation of the Sydney Filmmakers' Co-operative.

At times, their extensive coverage of the movement movements which preceded the resurgence of the mainstream commercial industry by nearly 10 years, is a little too partisan. For instance, the account of the so-called "Cultural" group in the 1960s (including Muriel Nazzari, Dave Miller, Tim Burwell, Bruce Davis and others) gives the impression that the "bad boys" and "underground" somehow had a more than their Sydney counterparts. "Melbourne's independent film-makers had for many years received monetary aid from the State Film Centre and the Federation of Victorian Film Societies."

In fact, the majority of filmmakers who benefited from the limited funds available was very small and rather than imply this situation gave the Melbourne "underground" some sort of available backdrop on Sydney, the authors may have better supplied an overview of their Victorian links towards the development of an indigenous film culture.

But these misgivings are minor, and the significant space accorded to the low-budget cinema goes deep to Shirley and Adams' gripping and informative account of the new phase of the industry between 1965 and 1975.

Apert from the coverage accorded to the 1972 Tariff Inquiry, the authors follow through the industry lobby for the creation of the Australian Film Development Corporation, the establishment of the national film school and the founding of the International Film and Television Fund.

The notorious exploit of Senator Doug McEldred (Member for the Mallee in the 1973 Labor Cabinet) and



his notorious co-optation by the authoritarian powers of Jack Valenti (President of the Motion Picture Association of America) are given great prominence. In hindsight it is clear that these problems apparently retarded and undermined the unparalleled contributions of many local filmmakers toward the development of a viable industry.

Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years is a historical account of our contemporary history made with more than a passing interest in the Australian industry should and hence to add the volume to his or her collection. And, apart from its content, the book is excellently presented: the simplicity of its index and its ease of access to a reference work cannot be faulted.

Although this present volume focuses its account in 1975, the book clearly shows the need for a similar history of the "future days" that followed. Shirley and Adams could produce a valuable and beneficial companion to this extensive, sensitive and accurate historical account.

The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema

Robert Phillip Kolker
Oxford University Press,
New York, 1983
Paperback, 48pp, A\$16.50
ISBN 0 19 503352 7

Derek Boston

Robert Kolker, who is assistant professor of Film Studies at the University of Maryland, has followed his study of contemporary American cinema, *A Cinema of Consciousness*, with a broad-ranging survey and analysis of modernism cinema in Europe and Latin America. *The Altering Eye* is published by Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1983.



Early days: Charles Tail's The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906)

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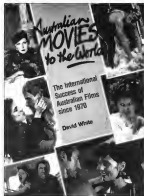
with Profiles of Actors and Directors by Debi Ecker

At the end of the 1960s Australia had virtually no film industry. By 1985 its movies were being shown throughout the developed world. From mainstream theatres in America to art houses in Europe.

In a rapid transformation, a country which had previously been best known for its kangaroos and kookas produced something new and surprising: in quite a few instances, "the world's most vital cinema, extravagantly creative, fiercely independent."

Australian Movies to the World looks at how this transformation came about and how those movies broke into the international market. And, through interviews with Australian and overseas directors, producers, actors, distribution executives and critics, it tells the story of the people who made it all possible.

David White is a writer based in Sydney. He worked as a newspaper journalist for 13 years, including stints as a correspondent in Papua New Guinea and as a news executive. He became Federal Publicity Officer of the Australian Labor Party in 1971 and, after Labor's election to national office in 1972, Media Secretary to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. He resigned from that post in late 1974 to travel overseas. Back in Australia, he became a film publicist in 1978 and, in that capacity, made a number of trips to Europe and America. He is married to film editor Denise Hunter.



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Forum Gaea

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story of today. Miss Furrow, who starred in the film, has adopted two kids from Korea and two kids from Vietnam. Maybe this is one of the reasons she accepted the role, because she is familiar with this tragedy. It is not light entertainment.

Around the World with Dot

In 1961, with "Around the World with Dot," you returned to meet light-hearted entertainment. ()

It is more a lesson in zoology. After watching the film, most children will know more about it than they knew before.

How has the film fared in the cinema?

The film has been sold in the U.S. and was distributed in Australia by Hepia Today. It is a best-seller on video in England; in the U.S., it has been screened every Christmas since it was made, which is twice already. It has beautiful music, beautiful songs. Bob Young was right: the composer.

Dot and the Bunny

Dot and the Bunny (1963) was done when I was hoping to make an entertaining documentary

about Australian flora and fauna. It has beautiful photography by John Shaw from Film Australia and was successful. For a lot of people, it is the first time they have seen the birth of a kangaroo, or occasionally coming out of eggs.

I like films that have a lot of messages. Dot and the Bunny is about a bunny who wants to be a kangaroo because he thinks bunnies are not good enough. Even when a kangaroo is killed, it can be a survivor from Australia. But we don't like bunnies, we kill them in pairs. So Bunny puts on a tail and jumps up and down, doing all the things kangaroos do. The conclusion of Dot and the Bunny is that when you are born Bunny, you will be Bunnies 'til de vie. But he decides there is nothing wrong with being a bunny. This is one of the messages.

That is the story which carries over from "Dot and the Kangaroo," where the kangaroo lost her joy. ()

Dot and the Kangaroo, Around the World with Dot and Dot and the Bunny are a trilogy, one story comes out of the other and they are all successful.

What did the budget rise to on "Dot and the Bunny"?

It was \$400,000. But our current film, The Camel Boy, has a budget of \$1.3 million. Sarah had three animators, while The Camel Boy has 40 animators and assistants. The production process is faster, and there are more drawings of better quality.

All the production and pre-production is in the hands of animators.



A production still from Around the World with Dot, the 20 kangaroo bunnies and other characters introduced to television on a last but

one director: for example, the animation director on Eyle (1963) was Arthur Healy, on Dot and the Koola it was Glenda Cook, on Dot and Kerio and The Camel Boy, Roy Neale. In this way I am able to produce and direct a few productions in one, helped by people who have been in the animation business for a long time.

Have the number of drawings increased? For example, in "Dot and the Kangaroo," how many cells or pieces of artwork did you have?

About 10,000. On The Camel Boy, there were 60,000, which makes for better evolved animation.

The story of Dot continues on and becomes "Dot and the Koola" in 1964. ()

In Dot and the Koola, the story is set in Tasmania, and is about the conflict that surrounded the damming of the Franklin River. The humans are presented as domestic animals which want to lead the small town toward a better life — in their opinion. The native animals are against this dam: they prefer to retain the beautiful river and bush where they live. In the end, helped by Dot, the native animals succeed in preventing the dam being built and the domestic animals realize how beautiful life is with what they have, without the development which would have damaged nature.

I am not saying in the film that you should not develop things, but that progress can be made without damaging something that is beautiful.

Then we have Dot and Kerio. The story is that Dot, instead of curing the root she ate in Dot and the Kangaroo to understand the animals, she suffers from a virus and she thinks in this way we can introduce insect life. The film is based again on magnificent

images that we found by John Shaw. Here again, we learn several new things about the insects. We are also crying, for my first time, to do a form of music!

So you are returning to music, your first love. ()

All the films, except the last one, The Camel Boy, for technical reasons, are involved in music. But we tried to make Dot and Kerio a musical. When we see the Camel Boy produce her eggs, we have a song that describes how it is her job to make a new society. On Monday she produces eggs to be hatched on Tuesday morning, on Wednesday soldiers.

On Sunday, of course, the producers sing for the royal family.

We use few footings of insects in so entertaining way — it won't be a dry documentary — and by the end Dot and the Koola will know a lot about insects.

This film is in production. In pre-production are Dot and the Koola, Dot and the Bunny and Terra Australia. Terra Australia is about the history of Australia 30,000 years ago. Dr. Michael Archer is a consultant and the film is based on his archeological discoveries. It is an animated film with puppets, the first time I have used them since Joseph the Dreamer.

Why are you returning to three dimensions?

Because we have found very talented people who produce puppets.

What have been some of the technical developments in the Young Gaea Film Studio?

There are three new developments. The first is the introduction of a laser-line machine from Japan, the first in Australia. It is a computer, not a video recorder, and has a memory bank capable of storing 250 line drawings. Each



Dot and the Bunny: "...when you are born Bunny, you will be Bunnies 'til de vie."



Gross on location for the background filming of *The Camel Boy*

artist can register the drawings he has done on paper into the computer, which takes five to 30 minutes, and call up the drawing immediately on a monitor. Let us say he is looking at his 20 drawings and suddenly sees that drawing number 14 is not good enough; he can take it out from the memory and replace it with another drawing without registering the existing drawings, it happens on.

The machine is one of the reasons that our standard of animation is improving.

What are the other technical advances?

We have an incredible Xerox machine, which is again the only one in Australia and comes from Japan. It duplicates a pencil drawing on celluloid without scratching the celluloid or leaving spots. It does the job faster and better.

We also have a new camera which allows us to see instantly on a large television screen, the end of a small screen, what is being shot by the camera operator. It is a normal film camera combined with a television camera.

What do you feel is your contribution to Australian cinema, to children and to animated film?

My contribution is that I produce feature films, now step, in Australia. My aim is to have these films shown best, too. I believe our film films are well-known overseas, in the US and in Europe, and every year they are becoming more well-known in Australia, however, we are still fighting to show them. We are trying to achieve this through our own company, Young Australian Films, by taking our films to schools.

Now, because we wish to expose these films in cinemas as well, we initiated an Australian Children's International Film Festival. The

festival was Gipsy Films and the premiere, opened by the Prime Minister, was on May 5 in Sydney. The Festival was, in future, be part of UNESCO's involvement in promoting children's film festivals around the world. The Festival was a non-profit venture because the aim was to expose children's films which are not accepted in the cinema for some reason. This way children will be able to see Australian and international children's films which, though not commercially viable, are artistically valuable.

Filmography

Features

- 1981 *Joseph the Dreamer*
- 1981 *One Person Only*
- 1977 *Dot and the Kangaroo* (animated)
- 1979 *The Little Curlew* (animated)
- 1982 *Jack* (animated)
- 1981 *Save the Lady* (comprehensive only)
- 1981 *Around the World with Dot* (animated)
- 1982 *Dot and the House* (animated)
- 1983 *The Camel Boy* (animated)
- 1983 *Eyes* (animated)
- 1984 *Dot and the Kite* (animated, in production)
- 1984 *Save Australia* (in production)
- 1984 *Dot and Kite* (animated, in production)

Shorts

- 1958 *We Shall Never Be*
- 1958 *Champion that plays*
- 1959 *Kathleen*
- 1960 *The Ice machine*
- 1962 *And the Earth was Without*
- 1962 *Force and Void*
- 1963 *Yasouki Fantasy*
- 1966 *Karen's art*
- 1967 *Ball's progress*
- 1967 *Mount a mount*
- 1968 *Exposure work*
- 1969 *Box up*
- 1970 *Perkins*
- 1971 *The Notebook*
- 1974 *The East*
- 1975 *Sea*

Documentaries

- 1978 *The Politicians*
- 1977 *The First Animated Sup* ★

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absolutely no idea how it would work in a cinema. And you wouldn't get involved in wanting to put money into that sort of material because it is so high risk. So, television enables you to develop subject matter which otherwise may not be produced.

Other Projects

Should the ABC be in the problems of producing more experimental material?

The word "experimental" worries me because it is almost associated with "high-risk" and "anti-professionalism" that, it is almost very antithetical for producers in the organization to have a time slot available to try out new technologies and new forms of drama, and hopefully still attract a large audience. Producers in this department would find this very useful in the 1990s.

What do you think are your department's most outstanding productions?

I am a bit paralyzed when it comes to questions such as this because I am so fixed into the future and the present. In television, one of the problems for any person in my position is that the past disappears very quickly. But, incredibly, you hold on to the favorites as your memory betrays you as making measurements.

Without being offensive to other producers, it would be appropriate to list A Famous Last, I Can Jump Puddles, Scales of Justice and 1915. There is also Allen Barker's production of A Taste in Melba, a one-off drama which everyone remembers as being experimental, successful and innovative — all those adjectives which describe something that is fresh and daring. There was the children's series Blood, which is now screening in England, and you

could also look right back to the 1960s, to a series such as *My Brother Jack*, which was most impressive in its time.

One's perspective of the past constantly changes, so sometimes our own regards to contemporary or audience can gain new meaning. For example, *Belford*, of which I was not particularly fond, I now look back on as having considerable qualities. It had its usefulness as a contained audience and was, at the time, a real buster.

"Scales of Justice" was filmed using realistic techniques rather than melodrama. Do you think it has opened the door to more serious, pioneering work?

We do not set out to be controversial but rather to bring together a lot of stories which inevitably will be in conflict. If these characters and conflicts sit out in a modern setting, of course, it gives the drama a dynamic. A controversial drama has a feeling of contemporary truth about it.

Some of that contemporary truth creates an audience reaction which can be quite shocking, which, of course, is good drama. . .

Scales of Justice had a strong reaction because a deal with complex political matters in a contemporary setting.

A lot of producers are coming to terms with the fact that some series were using history as a buffer, as a device to tackle a lot of stuff so the audience could come away saying, "That old, wasn't things terrible then." Producers in Australia now realize that the audience is sophisticated enough to see contemporary themes projected on the screen.

Another of my concerns about continuing to make historical drama is that we are not making anything at the moment to leave behind about our industry. Australia in 200 years should be able to go to a lead walk and say, "The ABC did a funny thing called *Men of Letters*. Let's put that up and see what they were doing in those days." It is very important

that we don't get locked into only reproducing the past, forgetting the present.

"Sweet and Sour" is, therefore, an attempt to relate to contemporary needs and explore the present mood of a generation. . .

With *Sweet and Sour*, we recognized that there was an audience of young people which was not being catered for by ABC television drama. We worked out some strict guidelines for the series that it was not to be sensational, it was to be a bit sexy, and it would have an migration of rock music. It was a fairly high-risk area although Geoffrey Hoggan, who is an established director, did the first two episodes, the directors who came on line after that were all ABC trainee directors, and it was Jan Chapman's first job as executive producing in the ABC. Our feeling was that it would demonstrate again that the Drama department was not a fuddy-duddy department locked into a particular style.

What have the ratings been?

A lot of people who watch *It's* *Who* in that time slot threw up their hands in horror and said, "We are going to leave the ABC till *Who*. Who comes on again." At the beginning, the ratings were small but it is amazing that they have climbed through the series. And, although the research we did indicated that the age group we were aiming for would be anything from 14 to 24, it seems to be much wider than that.

Your other series, "The Young Wife", is an audacious and rather unusual look at Melbourne's migrant community. . .

The *Young Wife* recognizes the roots of our multiculturalism, and it certainly says a great deal about Greek Cypriots in Australia 30 years ago.

We have discovered some very fine actors through this series, and there will be a continuing recognition of new actors from multicultural backgrounds. We are also doing, for instance, a play by Leni Novak, *Displaced Person*, about a group of refugees who arrive in Sydney from Eastern Europe immediately after World War 2. For that, we have our Eastern European actors living in Australia.

Matt Carroll, of *Chances* 16, said recently that the ABC was failing to produce sufficient seasonal programs springing from the minorities in our community and, therefore, was not fulfilling its charter. . .

In terms of fulfilling our charter, we would like to be doing much more. But I would have thought that *Sweet and Sour* and

Scales of Justice were pioneering work. I don't have any more to say, if Matt Carroll says more he will see some more pioneering work. We have material on hand that has not even been thought of by the commercial channels.

Do you ever feel hamstrung being a creative department within a public-service framework?

It is quite a framework to protect public money and see that money is spent wisely. Sure, you have problems, but you have them if you are running a small theatre or an independent film company, and it is important to have administrative rules. The ABC is still one of the great places for relative creative freedom.

What other projects are you planning?

We are hoping to remain the *Sweet and Sour* group because they are bright people to have in the department. They are looking at another series which will have more association with us. We are doing a 10-part series in Sydney called *Palace of Dreams* being produced by Sandra Levy which will, again, introduce the element of multiculturalism. I am pleased that multiculturalism is part of our charter, not though television has simply because it is a very powerful dramatic art that hasn't been tapped sufficiently in this country. What I hope will happen in the next few years is that we will see films along the lines of those that *Elia Kazan* was making in the 1950s.

Multicultural drama will be a turning point in Australian writing in the next 10 to 20 years. It may not be as innovative but it is inevitable, particularly with all the tension with multiculturalism, that someone is going to tap it and write something brilliant. Once we start to look at the conflicts and the positive questions which exist between the mix of nationalities we have in Australia, there is no doubt we will start to get a new kind of writing. There is a force there which will suddenly pick up and it is very important for ABC Drama to be at the forefront of that.

Why then did ABC Drama not take up the offer of producing "Women of the Sea" some years ago?

The difficulty was not to do with the subject matter, but with the resources and facilities to handle it at the time. The ABC did buy the second run.

I wouldn't like to be leading a drama department that shied away from explosive issues or confrontational drama. But there has to be a balance. If you are going to upset one season of the audience, you should, hopefully, be pleasing another season. ★



Jan Chapman and Tim Gillingham, who directed *Women and Men* and wrote six of the 29 episodes.

Pattinson and Sardi

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visual style changed since "Moving Out"?

Pattinson: I don't think it has changed a lot, but it is a progression. Obviously, moving a camera works very well with music, and can give the effect of the film going like a main train.

Some people have said they find some things difficult to follow. It is interesting that the adults such as a camera that provide information is a linear or individual manner something is introduced and adults want to see it developed and resolved clearly. The kids' reverberations of the film seems far greater than a lot of adults they take small pieces of information and hang on to them for a small amount of time. If it amounts to nothing, the kids will just turn it away rather than confess themselves by trying to work out where it is supposed to be going.

Sardi: That's right. Adults intellectualize. When kids watch pop vids they interpret them and assume their own story, whereas adults tend to sit back and look for the conventional story-line, and wait for it to be resolved. And while they are doing that, they are missing what is happening on the screen. They really can't see the form for the teens. Kids will recognize those impressions and they will do something with them.

The design of the film and the photography are quite bold and striking. To what extent did Brian Thomson (production designer) and Vince Mason (director of photography) decide on the look and atmosphere of the film?

Pattinson: The film was conceived at a script stage, as one which borrowed from other genres and was heavily stylized. Vincent and Brian's contributions to that stylization are enormous. I had worked with Brian on another project being developed in Sydney years ago and, from the moment that Ian and I started to develop this idea, Brian was the first person to whom we spoke.

A lot of Australian films don't really look like anything in particular, except well exposed. Brian is a designer, not an art director. An art director more often than not walks into a location and says, "Well, I think that painting should be a Norman Lindsay rather than a Picasso," or "I don't like the color of the ashtray." Brian walks into a location and says, "This is the part of that wall there. We will paint the whole place, change all the tables and move the roof up three feet." He starts from scratch. There is no point having a very colorful danger, such as boxes, if you are not going to go all

out for something that really has a distinctive look and style. That is why a lot of the film is constructed around sets.

Brian built a massive back-lot which contained Easy Street. That was an idea that grew out of conversations between Brian and myself. Rather than set the film in a million different locations, we decided to find somewhere you have a lot of activity could occur, even though Ian had written a specific location for Easy Street. Brian took a lot of those ideas and put them all in one spot. And Brian and Vincent worked very closely together on the lighting and style. The emphasis on red is totally Brian's idea, and I think it looks stunning.

Did you have an audience, or an international market, in mind when you decided to make the film look as though it could be set in any city, in any country?

Pattinson: If your question is, "where are trying to be made Pacific?", the answer is most definitely so.

Sardi: It is part of the heightened reality of the film. Brian's sets are poetry more than real life. I like to describe the film as having as fast as sound reality but its head way up in the clouds, and that is a type of poem. The whole nature of the score is drawn from real events and collaged to make one story. Given that, there was no single location that suited all of our requirements. So we thought it was far better to create something fictional which drew together a lot of truths, but was not set in any particular city. It is not really as accurate as it general, but, although there was no conscious effort to avoid it, the film does not take on a provincial feel. It probably does give the production a fairly international look.

In a film such as "Flashdance" or "Saturday Night Fever", the music plays an enormous part in identification with characters. How did you go about selecting the music for "Street Hero"?

Pattinson: Obviously, the music is crucial, but it is really the fusion between the music and the images that creates such feeling. In Rocky 2, it is the fusion between that famous anthem and the shots of Rocky bouncing up and down with his arms in the air on the steps of the Philadelphia Town Hall. They click together.

Some of the music for Street Hero was recorded in a rough draft location before we shot the film, so that we could feed it to a certain rhythm and pace. Even in the cases where it was recorded afterwards, we knew that a particular scene was going to be in about a 5/8 tempo so we could use other tracks or guide tracks to get an idea

of what the pace of the film should be.

A lot of the music was selected by sifting through thousands of demos of different people's work and trying them with the rough pictures or trying ideas in different spots. The odd thing with music is that songs which, on first impression, you would never think would work with the sort of imagery you have for some reason just fit into shape. For instance, the song that Shamus O'Neill wrote for us, "Blood Red Roses" I had thought of that sequence as much more suspense than it was — not so much in terms of the cutting patterns of the pictures, but of what the music was doing. But a slower tempo seems to be a more counter-balance.

Sardi: With films such as Flashdance and Staying Alive, the film just seems to be a coexistence on which to bring a lot of music and sell the film. We try and do a little more than that. A lot of films have a radio or internet in every shot so you can have more blurring, and then they fill in the music, or do a message, that in Street Hero there is a lot going on through the music sequence, which kids pick up on. They are used to watching video clips and interpreting them, so it wasn't a question of just, "Oh, time for another song now, let's shoot some angles." We tried to apply information to give impression of what was happening and of character development.

Many of the words in the songs relate directly to the action. The opening number, "I've Got to be a Hero", defines Vince . . .

Pattinson: That is the one song which relates directly to visuals. I find music strongly that, when writing a song for a film, the worst thing one can do is narrate the action with the lyrics. Most of the songs express the sort of environment in which Vince moves and, in an artistic way, what are his hopes and aspirations. Well if you go to the point where the lyrics are a narrative, that is just doing it wrong. You think you are working towards a fusion between the

music and the pictures, but in fact it is just getting further away, because you are forced to focus either on one or the other.

Sardi: What we want is music to create the right mood or atmosphere to enhance the drama, rather than fill the gaps.

"Street Hero" and "Moving Out" strive to incorporate elements that are going to attract adolescent audiences. Do you think that Australian films have neglected that section of the audience in the past?

Pattinson: Every production one tends for a film says that it is going to appeal to the 15- to 25-year-old audience, because everybody knows they represent the majority of cinemagoers. When you read on, in a lot of cases, it becomes clear that it may not have much appeal to that audience.

What does appeal to that audience?

Sardi: Something with a lot of energy and a sense of aggression. Plus the sense of working and break out of the environment, and the community that you live in.

Those are also fantasies. Every kid has had a teacher that they wanted to screw, a teacher they wanted to punch in the mouth. So you tap their fantasies and dreams, even if it is just wanting to play a musical instrument or kick an old hood badly. They want to live those moments. They want to escape.

Pattinson: When we set out to make this film, we looked very carefully at films such as Rocky and Flashdance and what they do so well. While the critics may underestimate these films because they might not conform to what they believe a film should be in terms of conventions, you cannot argue with the fact that the kids over our excited. It might just only until they get out the front door or back to the carpark, but they want to jump in the air and scream. It motivates them to do something with their lives. It was precisely that driving force that we used, and a factor in creating that is the sense of personal achievement. ★

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